# Lilith

lependent, Jewish & frankly feminist

**GREEN & EWISH**
Eco-revolutionaries

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ermann Hesse
Brooklyn

**VITH THIS VEDDING**
Disappear

om Jerusalem,
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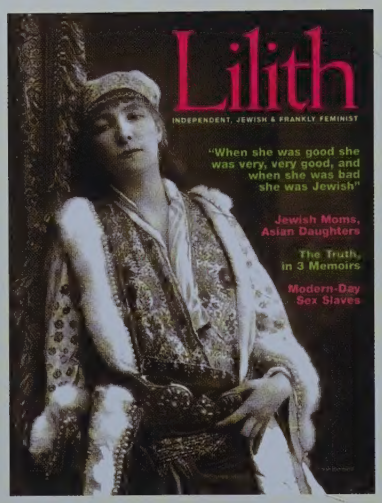
Farmer Esther Mandelheim Elliott with her broadfork

# Lilith back issues

independent, Jewish & frankly feminist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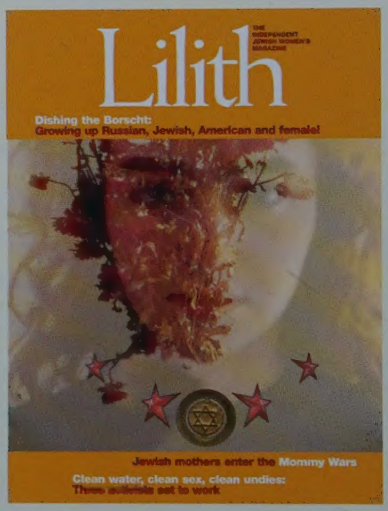
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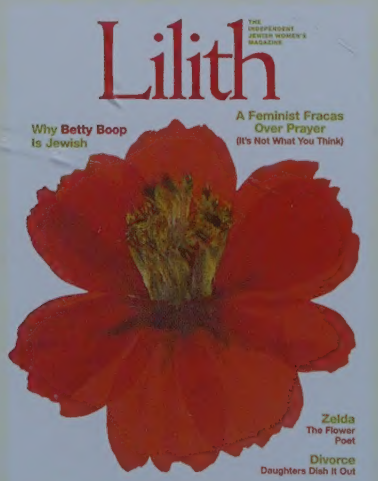
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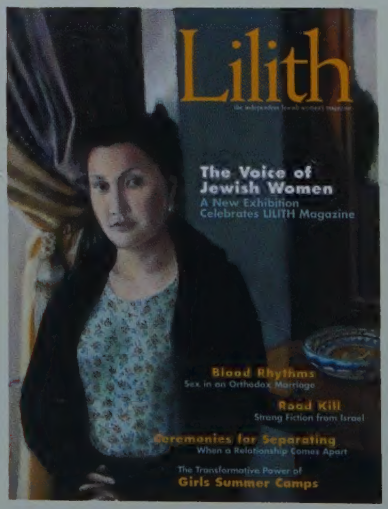
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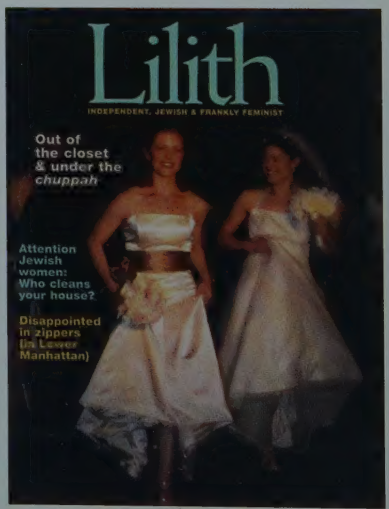
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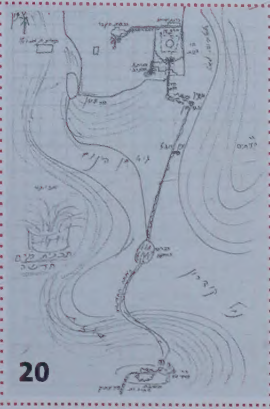

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# Lilith

Fall 2007

**Why is this magazine called Lilith? In the Garden of Eden, long before the eating of the apple, the Holy One created the first human beings—a man, Adam, and a woman, Lilith. Lilith said, "We are equal because we are created from the same earth."**

*from The Alphabet of Ben Sira, 23a–b*


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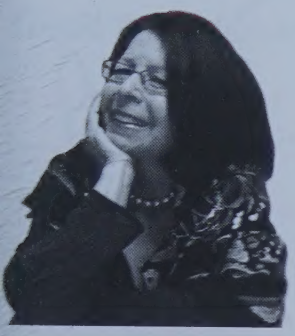


In the elevator of Lilith's office building, news is perpetually flashed at us on a small TV screen, just in case we might be tempted to say hello to our co-passengers. Last week, on the two-minute ride to the 24th floor, I learned that, according to "a recent survey," 20 percent of North Americans feel guilty that they are not doing more for "the environment." It's not exactly news, as we swing through the 21st century, that, deep down, we feel increasingly uncomfortable depleting natural resources—trees, water, fossil fuels, the shoreline—however much we might be tempted to buy yet another cheap T-shirt made in China and shipped to us from halfway around the world.

This issue features Jewish women who have become eco-pioneers, giving us new ways to think about the ways we utilize the natural and manufactured universe. These women are deeply conservative, in the strict sense of the word. They want to conserve: to protect and not waste precious resources, and they look to Jewish sources to buttress them.

I'm worried now about another kind of waste: the squandering of intellectual capital.

Jewish women—51% of the Jews—are underrepresented in a lot of Jewish life. Years ago, in Lilith's pages Cynthia Ozick wrote a memorable piece naming "the Jewish half-genius." By this she meant that while there's much *naches* from Jewish achievement in all fields, and a lot of rant about "Jewish genius," this is more correctly labeled half-genius, since women are left out from the count and the canon. Think this accusation is so Twentieth Century? Think again.

Just this week—the same week in which the elevator's mini-TV reports on our worries for the planet—three emails arrived in my in-box. Maybe in yours too.

- JOFA, the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance, writes to Jewish schools and other institutions, warning them not to order the new, visually beautiful Artscroll women's siddur. This prayerbook virtually ignores the fact that Jewish women, even the most traditionally observant, are permitted to participate in much more of Jewish worship than this prayerbook indicates. Here's what Jennifer Stern Breger says in her review of the prayerbook for JOFA: "Every time Mourners *Kaddish* appears, rather than saying that there are different opinions, the notes say clearly, 'Although reciting *Kaddish* is a comfort for the soul of the departed, even silent recitation by a woman is generally frowned upon'."
- The Rabbinic Cabinet of the United Jewish Communities, the umbrella organization for Jewish federations across the U.S. and Canada, announces videos of four rabbis commenting on Torah texts for the High Holidays, choosing four male rabbis to represent current Jewish thinking. (The UJC leadership subsequently issued a statement acknowledging the error and promising to do better in the year to come.)
- Melanie Weiss, a blogger and Lilith assistant editor, posts on Lilith's blog about relegation of the opinions of smart Jewish women—Cynthia Ozick among them—to the arts and culture pages of Jewish periodicals (not Lilith, obviously) and how infrequently they're called upon for comment in hard news stories.

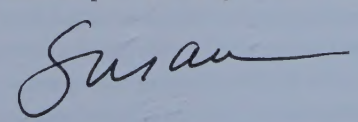
The number of remarkable Jewish women in our midst today—and their books, and films, and paintings and classes and conversations and book groups and, now, salons—is stunning. We're all—male and female—enormously lucky to be living in an era where we can benefit and rejoice in the intellectual productivity of these women along with men.

And yet, and yet, there is a chariness, a stinginess. As if the organizers of a conference on the future of Jewish life—with only male speakers—or the author the book *Fifty Key Jewish Thinkers*—with *not one* woman in its Pantheon of 50—can't acknowledge how much they'd gain from including women, and Jews of every background, on their lists. What are these guys thinking?

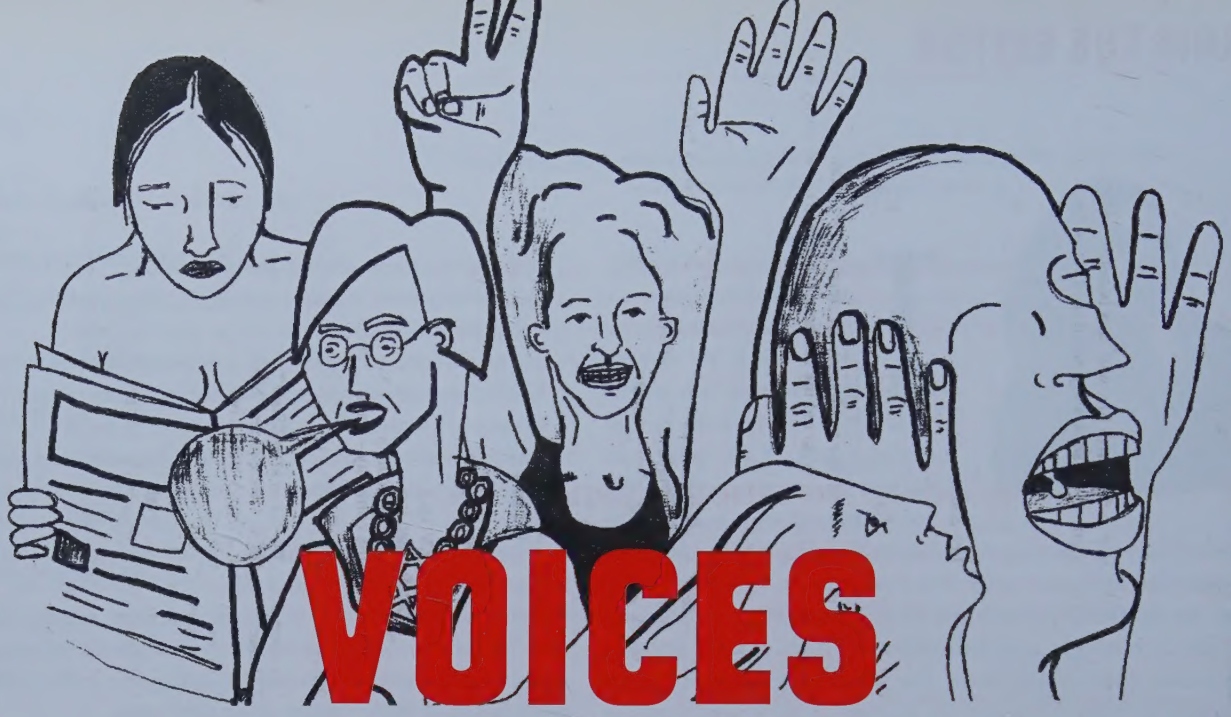
## Don't squander *intellectual* resources!

These lacunae squander a precious resource—the intellectual production of Jewish women. And women, especially younger women, get it. Believe me. They vote with their feet when they see, after working in a Jewish organization, that their chances of advancement are little better than nil, or that when they are inveigled into attending a Jewish event they don't see people like themselves on the podium, or that after an experience in youth groups or Hillels they're not nurtured as future leaders.

Eight gorgeous and provocative pages in this issue of Lilith spotlight women with fresh ways of thinking about how we live, who have been ahead of their time in recognizing the value of not-wasting, of living well, perhaps even better than the ways they were raised. As we praise their work, and learn from it, and commit to our own pledges to honor this planet's physical gifts, we'll need to push for using women's intellectual capital wisely as well.



*Susan Weidman Schneider*
*Editor in Chief*



# VOICES

**Traditionally, the voice of the Jewish woman was not to be heard in public, lest it arouse men. No more. These pages are for news about Jewish women, in our own strong voices.**

NEW YORK POST
25 CENTS
LATE CITY FINAL
Piece in the Mideast
Hebrew-haha over Israeli beauty queen
PAGE 3
Israeli Defense Forces
The Chosen Ones
They're drop-dead gorgeous and can take apart an Uzi in seconds. Are the women of the Israeli Defense Forces the world's sexiest soldiers?

## Hard to Top This

Israel has decided to reach out to young male tourists by publishing images of semi-clad female former soldiers in the American men's magazine, Maxim. The pictures are part of a public relations drive to improve the image of the country within the U.S.

"We definitely have public relations problems, and I'm all for creative solutions," Israeli lawmaker **Colette Avital** said. "But there are enough beautiful and interesting things we can use to tap into this demographic than to show a half-naked woman in a magazine of this kind."

The photo spread included pictures of Israeli model **Nivit Bash**—who served in Israeli military intelligence—and former Miss Israel, **Gal Gadot**.

The Israeli consulate defended its decision. "Males that age have no feeling toward Israel one way or another, and we view that as a problem, so we came up with an idea that would be appealing to them," David Dorfman, a media adviser at the consulate, told the press.

BBC NEWS ONLINE, JUNE 20, 2007

## Good Talk Makes Trouble

"Early on in our Lilith salon in Princeton, we explored social-change activism and what issues we as women might take on. The salon—a group of 25 or so local women who meet for good conversation around each new issue of the magazine—found our first cause while discussing "Jewish Moms, Chinese Daughters" (spring 2006). We started to talk about how Hebrew school materials and kids' books don't reflect the diversity of the Jewish community. Spurred by our spirited salon conversation, the Princeton Jewish Center (a conservative synagogue) took on diversity awareness as a year's project, including inviting **Bryan Schwartz** to discuss his multimedia exhibition "Jews of Color." Salon camaraderie, potluck meals and good talk yielded unexpected results, including a commitment to stir things up."

**Eve Coulson**, on being a salon hostess. To start a Lilith salon or join one, visit lilith.org

"I'm redeeming the captives," **Stephanie Comfort** calls it. She's amassing a pictorial history of lost Jews, of long-gone individuals and communities that come alive again through the cards she collects.

Two cards of special interest: a Jewish-Chinese father and son on Kaifeng's Synagogue Street, circa 1900, and a German military band serenading the Jews of Bialystok at a Sabbath service, circa 1920. But Mrs. Comfort has special, very different favorites of her own. One of them shows a wooden synagogue in a small Lithuanian town. In another, a woman stands in front of synagogue ruins in Lvov, Poland.

"My own family came from these places," she says. "When I look at them, I say 'Grandma, I'm here!'"

But she also says, "This is disappearing. So I collect my Jewish background, no matter where the Jews came from."

FROM "WOMAN COLLECTS JEWISH POSTCARDS AS PICTORAL HISTORY," BY HARRIET P. GROSS, DALLAS MORNING NEWS, JULY 28, 2007

## Not a Rabbi, but a "Religious Mentor"

**Sara Hurwitz**, 30, is the religious mentor at Hebrew Institute of Riverdale in New York. The paid position was created by the synagogue's rabbi, Avi Weiss, to empower women in a male-dominated structure where prayer is gender-segregated. Though women cannot lead prayers or chant from the Torah, the reader's platform (*bimah*) is accessible from the women's section. This unusual innovation allows Hurwitz to ascend the bimah to give a discourse on the reading to the entire congregation and then resume her place in the women's section without walking through the men's seats.

"My role is similar to a rabbi," said Hurwitz, a Barnard College graduate who studied Jewish texts for three years at New York's Drisha Institute. "I teach and answer questions pertaining to religious observance. But the biggest part of my job is being a presence and helping women feel a sense of ownership over the service."

After four years, Hurwitz senses a big change. "The women's section sings louder and feels its place in the sanctuary," she said. "They feel more comfortable asking me certain questions than asking the rabbi."

FROM WOMEN'S E-NEWS, JULY 13, 2007

# Nora's Sisters in Israel

"While I sense anticipation among the women, I feel a slight—if not apprehension, then perhaps nervousness—among the men," With these words, seemingly only half in jest, the Norwegian ambassador to Israel Jakken Biorn Lian opened his remarks before an overflow audience at Tel Aviv.

One hundred one years after the death of **Henrik Ibsen**, almost 180 since his birth, the work of this trenchant Norwegian dramatist continues to be extensively performed. Among Ibsen's central themes: the quiet and not-so-quiet desperation of women trapped in society's strictures.

Ibsen wrote during the 19th century of a small frigid country in northern Europe, the setting often in small dark towns on the wild isolated coast. Yet his themes of oppression, suffering and betrayal are relevant internationally to both the modern and post-modern worlds.

Everybody will remember the first Ibsen play she saw. Mine was *Ghosts*, which my mother took me to see at age 13 in a Greenwich Village off-off-Broadway production on a dark wintry afternoon. Traveling back uptown on the subway she explained to me what I had just seen—the meaning of venereal disease and why the mother raged against her deceased husband for transferring it to their son. Since then I have been horrified by the bitterness of Hedda Gabler, watched hypocrisy triumph in *An Enemy of the People*, and attended several versions of Nora breaking out of her symbolic cage.

From India to Egypt, from Mozambique to China, from Norway to Italy, the centenary of Ibsen's death was commemorated by a series of conferences in his honor, a tribute fittingly entitled "Nora's Sisters." In May 2007 "Nora's Sister's" came to Tel Aviv, with Ibsen experts from academia and the theater. Among them were the directors of the Norwegian and Israeli theaters and Tel Aviv University professor **Gad Kaynar** speaking on evolving gender relations in performances of Ibsen.

Ibsen lived a stormy life both professionally and personally. "Ibsen's marital discord in his plays came straight from his own marriage," maintained University of Oslo Professor **Astrid Saether**. And although Nora has become an icon for feminists, *A Doll's House* is less a play about marital conflict than an indictment of all mankind, claimed Ms. **Ba Clemetsen**, director of the Ibsen festival in Norway.

Today hereditary syphilis, of which Ibsen wrote in Ghosts, is almost eradicated, but its lethal curse has been replaced by AIDS. A woman's property rights may not longer by legally subordinated to a man's, but in many societies her economic status still depends upon her partner. Young women are still bedazzled and seduced by powerful public figures (*The Master Builder*), still kept as trophy wives (*A Doll's House*), and still led to suicide over love (*Rosmersholm*). Ibsen phrases might be spoken by women anywhere in the world: "I thought it was love but it was just overwhelming lust"; "You bought me; I agreed; I sold myself."

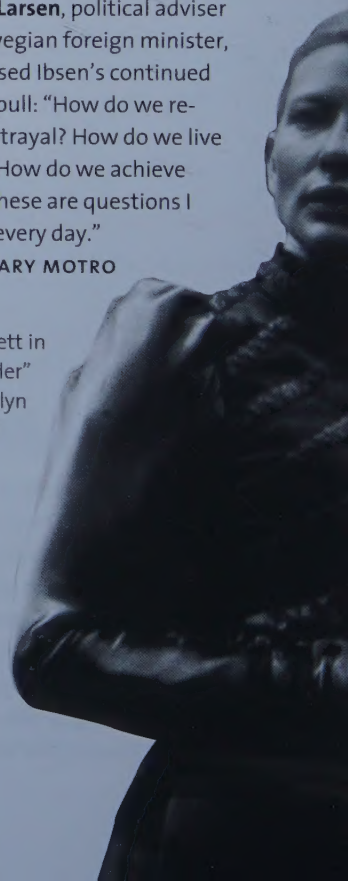
The Israeli conference included a local touch. It gathered for the first time on one stage the leading women of Israeli drama. **Hanna Meron**, **Gila Almagor**, and five other actresses performed a collage of monologues from the dramatist's plays. A panel

**"If I come home late then I'm viewed as neglecting my family."**

discussion featured a sampling of high-profile Israeli women discussing the challenges of gender relations. **Orna Angel**, a politician who directs the Tel Aviv Port, said, "If I come home late then I'm viewed as neglecting my family, whereas my husband can set up an appointment for anytime—7 or 8 P.M.—because he is the 'provider' of the home." Television journalist **Dana Weiss** was told by her former husband, "There isn't room under this roof for two stars."

Ms. **Gry Larsen**, political adviser to the Norwegian foreign minister, best expressed Ibsen's continued power and pull: "How do we respond to betrayal? How do we live truthfully? How do we achieve freedom? These are questions I ask myself every day."

HELEN SCHARY MOTRO



Cate Blanchett in "Hedda Gabler" at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 2006.

## Write Those Op-Eds!

**Catherine Orenstein**, an author, activist and occasional op-ed page contributor herself, has been training women at universities, foundations and corporations to write essays and get them published...

"Women tend to back away from 'what we know and why we know it,' she said. Next she asked the participants why they thought it important to write op-ed articles. Women shouted: 'Change the world,' 'shape public debate,' 'offer a new perspective,' 'influence public policy.'

"'You are all such do-gooders,' Ms. Orenstein said laughing, 'I love this.' She then proceeded to create another kind of list that included fame, money, offers of books, television series and jobs....

'What I want to suggest to you,' she continued, is that the personal and the public interests are not at odds, and 'the belief that they are mutually exclusive has kept women out of power.' Don't you want money, credibility, access to aid in your cause? she asked...."

FROM "STOP THE PRESSES, BOYS! WOMEN CLAIM SPACE ON OP-ED PAGES" BY PATRICIA COHEN, NY TIMES, MARCH 15, 2007

## Egg Matchmaking

614::HBI eZINE
http://www.brandeis.edu/hbi/614/index.html
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614
HBI eZINE
Jewish Egg Donation:
614::DID YOU KNOW?
•Donor eggs are now used in 12% of all IVF attempts, making it among the fastest-growing infertility treatments.
Source: "Your Gamete, Myself" by Peggy Orenstein (The New York Times Magazine, July 15 2007).

"It turns out that we Jewish women have been the ones to wait the longest to have our babies. According to the 2000 National Jewish Population Survey, more than half of 34-year-old Jewish women are childless, almost double the percentage of women overall.

from "A Strange New World" by Michelle Cove, published in 614, the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute's E-zine

No one is sure why Israeli women are more willing to donate their eggs [for in-vitro fertilization] than American Jewish women seem to be, but **Ruth Tavor** has her theories. Young Israeli women have been through the army (many of Tavor's recruits are recent army graduates who are traveling in America before beginning University), which she thinks makes them more adventurous and more mature. "They can make a decision," she says, as opposed to the few American women she's worked with, who she found to be less committed to the process. The truth is Tavor prefers working with Israeli donors because, as an Israeli herself, she understands them better. "I have no idea about Americans," she admits.

from "The Egg Matchmaker" by Rebecca Honig Friedman, 614.

"A lot of people assume egg donation is something that people are doing just to make money—as if it needs to be purely altruistic to be a good act. The amount of money is nothing but a very fair compensation for time invested and hardship suffered. That's why sperm donors only get paid a few hundred dollars."

from "Thoughts from a Donor," an anonymous interview, 614.

"I'm very proud that religion led the Gay Pride march this year. Gay rights are human rights. Those who use religion to advocate an anti-gay agenda, I believe, are blaspheming God's name."

**Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum**, one of two Grand Marshalls at the 2007 New York Gay Pride Parade.

## Letter from Straubing, Germany

The click of the lock was audible. I was locked in a synagogue in Germany, and there was no way out. My heart raced. I had come there to pray and to see how these Jews in Germany pray. But I wasn't there to get hurt.

Residents of the town had told me that there was no synagogue here, and no Jews. I was in town for two days before I discovered the old synagogue off the main square, shaded by weeping willows, with 10-foot-high wooden doors and stained glass windows.

The pews were filled with about 50 parishioners, new immigrants from the former Soviet Union, old and young. They weren't speaking to me and they weren't speaking German. I asked an older German-speaking woman where to find the prayer books. On purpose, even with my horrible Hebrew, I asked "Eyfo ha Siddurim?" A smile broke out on her face as she directed me to the Hebrew-only books. (How incredibly useless, I was to learn, for this non-German-speaking, non-Hebrew-speaking community.) With that, the first lines of the Shabbat service began.

The version of "Lekha Dodi" is the creaky one from my childhood, not the sensual, gyrating version from my mod Upper West Side synagogue. The lyrics were old and the voices were shaky. But I was struck how easy it was to follow the service and to participate in the music that connected me to these strangers.

Then, the announcements: First in German, by the leader of the synagogue, then translated into Russian for the rest of the congregation. Evidently, the doors were locked because skinheads had threatened to storm the synagogue during Shabbat. The mayor of the town and the state minister of the interior had offered to send police into the synagogue to protect the worshippers. This was unbelievable to me: a surreal discussion about Nazis and police protection and Shabbat, and Jews locked into a synagogue in the middle of Germany? Suddenly, people started screaming in Russian and in broken German about what should be done. "Call the newspaper!" "Have armed guards!" "Write an open letter to the community!" When the discussion eventually stopped, a blessing was made for the congregation (in the Hebrew and the German that the congregants didn't understand). Everyone turned to his or her neighbor and wished "Gut Shabbos."

After, through "the translator,"—a woman who'd come to Germany six months before the others—they told me their stories: "I was a judge in Latvia, now I wash bedpans in the old folks' home." "I was a lawyer in Lithuania with a huge practice, then things changed and there was the possibility to come to Germany. Now I work with the mentally ill." "I was a..." the stories continued. Finally, an elderly lady with a flowered scarf on her head turned to me and said "I have a daughter in America. She lives in Los Angeles. You are from New York. Maybe you can meet her some day?" The old lady cried and hugged me, as a proxy for the daughter she hadn't seen in years. Would I take a message to her? I said yes. Then the doors were unlocked, and people slowly left the building, following the leader's direction to stay in groups of three or more as they entered the town square. I stood alone in the medieval square.

A few weeks later I called the woman's daughter. We chatted like old friends, promising to keep in touch.

ROBIN HARPER

**Grace Paley,** author, activist, extraordinary teacher, died of breast cancer August 22 at age 84. Her work appeared in Lilith several times, including these lines from "(Another) Conversation" [Lilith, Fall 1991]:

"You know she said, there isn't a thing I've done in my life that I haven't done for some man. Dress up or go out or take a job or quit it or go home or leave. Or even be quiet or say something nice, things like that. You know I was up all night thinking about you and especially those young women. I couldn't stop thinking about what wonderful lives they're going to have."

In "Creating Art, Promoting Change: Works by Jewish Women," a 16-month day planner from Hadassah-Brandeis Institute, an eclectic group of 16 photographers, painters, sculptors, mixed-media, installation, and performance artists demonstrate art beyond aesthetic purposes alone; every piece is grounded in the artist's distinct social or political message. The planner showcases the entire history of women's activist art, from its pioneers (**Mierle Laderman Ukeles** on garbage trucks and **Judy Chicago**, of "Dinner Party" fame) and its pillars (**Beverly Naidus** and her body-size ideas in art) to its new talents (**Siona Benjamin** and **Ariane Littman-Cohen**.) The desk calendar profiles one activist artist and an example of their work each month. Constructed by Ariane Littman-Cohen, "Whiteland" is a series of aerial photographs of a forest in Israel planted in memory of her grandfather, part of which is currently being used as a military base; white blocks on the maps represent pictures of areas the military censors refused to release. **Marti Freidlander's** stark black-and-white portrait of an elderly Maori woman [above] shows a feminist, rather than Jewish, crusade, preserving the memory of the last group of New Zealand women with mokos, chin tattoos.

At last, it's possible to look at Jewish feminist art every time you check a date.

**Rebecca Katz**

# Henrietta Szold in Seneca Falls

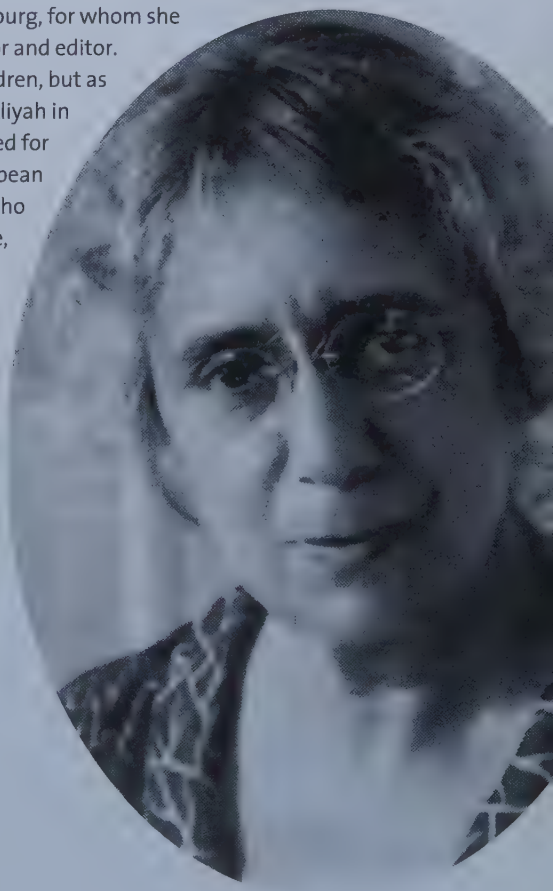
**Henrietta Szold** (1860-1945) is best known for founding Hadassah, the largest Jewish organization in American history. However, her early accomplishments breaking gender barriers in turn-of-the-century America are equally notable. Her contributions to American and Jewish history are celebrated this October with her induction into the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls.

In an interview at age 75, Szold credited her achievements to "a strong constitution, a devotion to duty and a big conscience" along with "a pretty big capacity for righteous indignation."

She was the only woman on the publications committee of the newly formed Jewish Publication Society in 1888, and the Federation of American Zionists elected her as the sole female member of its executive committee in 1898. In 1902, she was admitted to the all-male Jewish Theological Seminary as a "special student" on the condition that she would not seek to be ordained as a rabbi. In the personal realm as well, Szold was fearless about treading into traditionally masculine territory. After her mother died, leaving behind only daughters, a male friend offered to say Kaddish for her. Szold politely refused his offer, stating: "You can do that for the generations of your family, I must do that for the generations of my family."

Szold never married; her passionate disappointment in love is chronicled in her diaries and her letters to the scholar Louis Ginzburg, for whom she served as translator and editor. She never had children, but as director of Youth Aliyah in the 1930's, she cared for thousands of European refugee children who arrived in Palestine, involving herself in the placement of every child and meeting the transports personally. In tribute, a young boy from one of the last Youth Aliyah transports recited the Kaddish at her funeral.

SHULAMIT FALIK



# First *Frisson*

## The Mother

Let me start with the bat mitzvah. The scene is clear in my mind. It was in the evening, probably in the fall of 1954 or 1955. As a student at Boston's public Girls Latin School, I was having my private war with Latin composition. The Latin book was open as I sat in the kitchen of our Roxbury apartment—there was no desk in the bedroom I shared with my younger sister– and tried to learn it. My mother, a fine Latin scholar, was probably coaching.

Our rabbi, Israel J. Kazis, phoned me. He was apparently on the point of introducing the bat mitzvah—or was it the bas mitzvah?—at our Conservative shul, Temple Mishkan Tefillah, and he offered me the honor of being the first. I was polite, as I sat cross-legged on the floor, phone in one hand, book in the other. After all, he was my rabbi. But, stubborn and independent-minded, I knew, better than did he, or so I thought, that halakhah, Jewish law, circumscribes women's participation. I turned down his offer of the opportunity to chant a haftarah at the late Friday night service, followed by a reception—cake, cookies, punch in the social hall. I firmly maintained that women had no business on the bimah, on the pulpit, but generously counter-offered a recital of Hebrew poetry in the social hall after the davening. He deemed that unsatisfactory. The result of this impasse was that, when my closest friends marked their Jewish coming of age, I was there to celebrate only their achievements, but none of my own.

How did I know my mind with such conviction? A year or so earlier I had suffered public humiliation in my synagogue's *Kabbalat Shabbat* Friday sundown chapel service. My father used to take my younger sister, my brother, and me with him every Friday night. We generally sat at the back in the crowd of old men, but got to drink the sweet kiddush wine at the front of the chapel at the end of the recitation of kiddush. That week one of the men, noticing my developing body, had loudly told my father that I was no longer a child and should therefore remain in my place at the back. I smarted at the public nature of this pronouncement, at the gaze at my body it reflected, and at the loss of childhood privilege it presaged; but I accepted my new status as divinely mandated.

Growing up as an observant, *Shomeret Shabbat* Conservative Jewish girl—a small niche in postwar Irish and Italian Catholic Boston—shaped my identity in many ways. Like the rest of my family, I was clearly not part of the mainstream, and felt little need to assimilate into the world of my classmates at Girls' Latin School, where my French teacher kept track of students' attendance at Mass. At the same time, I loved the women's community there where all the students and virtually all the faculty were women, but what I learned there was more memorization and discipline than independent thinking.

In all areas my family was the central educating force. It was a three generation family in a three-bedroom, one-bath apartment. My maternal grandmother had traveled by herself from Bialystok to Boston at age 12. Bubbie so valued learning that when my mother, her baby, entered high school she went to night school to earn an eighth-grade certificate. Her spoken English was fine, but she would read the *Morgen Journal* aloud, unintentionally teaching me Yiddish. That was augmented by my parents, both excellent Yiddish speakers, who used Yiddish for their secrets, so I just had to decode it. My parents, both born in Boston to immigrant parents and educated there, both Phi Beta Kappa, both educators, shaped the experience of growing up in an atmosphere where learning, both Jewish and secular, and Jewish observance were primary. I didn't realize at the time how special my family's focus on education was.

On the surface it might seem that I have done an about-face since my non-Bat Mitzvah through my vigorous support for equal rights for women in Judaism, particularly in the Conservative movement, but that's just the surface. In truth, the lessons I learned about values, integrity and standing for what one thinks is right remain with me—they are just differently applied. When my sister and I as adults had both decided to daven in tallitot in our own communities, we were a bit wary of outing our parents in their then adamantly non-egalitarian Conservative shul, Kehillath Israel, forcing them weekly to face the opprobrium of having produced such offspring. We asked our father, the more consistent shul-goer, how he felt about our appearing the next morning in our tallitot. Abba thought for a minute and said: "Do you think it's the right thing to do?" We nodded. "Then do it." That's what I really learned. ■

***Anne Lapidus Lerner's*** *new book is* Eternally Eve: Images of Eve in the Hebrew Bible, Midrash, and Modern Jewish Poetry *(New England University Press, 2007). A version of this piece was presented at an NYU conference session sponsored by the Jewish Women's Archive.*

# f Feminism

## The Daughter

It's hard, perhaps impossible, to recall what I thought when this photograph was taken. I can look at the image of my 16-year-old self life-size in a museum, but it's very hard to access what I was thinking behind those huge glasses. I remember that the photo shoot took forever, that it was terribly uncomfortable—my head tilted at an odd angle, my arm held stiffly to better display my tefillin. I remember feeling honored to have been chosen, to be in the picture with some of the rabbinical students I knew and admired, among whom I hoped someday to study. I remember feeling somewhat exultant that the make-up person had insisted on applying lipstick to my mother, who never indulged in such frivolities, and who was constantly puzzled by my passion for make-up and glitter. But I don't really know what I thought would come of it, and once that long shoot was over, I don't think I thought of it much at all. I finished high school, spent a year studying in Israel, and returned to New York to start college.

That October, Frederic Brenner's *Jews/America/A Representation* was published, and the picture was suddenly everywhere. In the pages of Lilith. In the Jewish Week. In Life magazine. I was getting phone calls from friends, "I saw you in the doctor's waiting room!" Although the book featured over 800 photographs, inevitably it was ours—mine—that was included when the book was reviewed.

As I looked at the picture over and over again, I felt used. I didn't see myself in it, nor my mother, nor the other women I knew. Instead I saw the photographer's projection of what women in tefillin must be like: angry. He hadn't let us smile during the shoot—I did remember that—but I hadn't foreseen the effect of our unsmiling faces. We looked, to me, like a caricature of angry, scowling feminists. I called it the "Scary Amazon Women in Tefillin picture." Brenner had insisted that we all wear striped talleisim, instead of our own more varied individual ones. He'd said at the time that he wanted a unified look, but when I looked at the picture, I saw angry women in the traditional, very "masculine" tallis—women grasping at male ritual symbols, where I had never thought of talleisim as gendered before.

For me, davening in tallit and tefillin has never been about women demanding the right to engage in rituals that had been limited to men. To me, the tallit and tefillin are how Jews should pray, and I had never, until I saw myself in that picture, seen them as an act of feminist defiance.

My mother began davening in a tallit before I was born, and has been davening in tefillin for as long as I can remember. Most women who take on the mitzvot of tallit and tefillin must reach past an assumption of these ritual articles as masculine; to me they were Jewish—and mine.

The photo was unexpectedly on display at the Diaspora Museum in Israel while I was there one summer as a counselor. I talked to my campers about my conviction that Jewish observance need not be gendered. Tefillin aren't about defiance or about making a point.

But over time, something unforeseen began to happen. I started to get angry. I saw the female professors I admired in college not get tenure while their male counterparts were promoted. I saw the Jewish community blame highly educated working women for a declining birth rate. I saw women who had entered the Conservative rabbinate struggle for acceptance and for equality even 20 years after that historic decision. I saw my friends have babies and struggle to afford child care. And I realized that the optimistic feminist I was at 16 had been a bit naïve. There was much more left to be done than I had realized when I was entering college. And I am far angrier about the treatment of women than I ever thought I would have cause to be.

> I now recognize myself in that minyan of defiant women, and that is a terrible disappointment.

I don't think Brenner was somehow prescient in his portrayal of us. I certainly don't think that he was predicting my own personal disillusionment. While I still think that his photo doesn't capture the essential love of Judaism, of prayer, of God, of ritual—whatever it was that had brought each of the ten very different women in his picture to take on the mitzvot of tallit and tefillin, I now recognize myself in that minyan of defiant women, and that is a terrible disappointment. ■

***Rahel Lerner** is a book editor in New York.*

# WITH THIS WEDDING, I LEAVE MYSELF BEHIND

*A first-person account by* LEAH LAX

AUGUST 10, 1975, IT IS THE FIFTH DAY OF ELUL ON THE HEBREW CALENDAR, THE MONTH OF PREPARATION, THE MONTH OF RETURN. We chose this date for our wedding to accommodate my cycle, but, perhaps it's stress, my cycle has been irregular, unpredictable, and here I am on the day of my wedding and I am bleeding, which means that I will be forbidden to my new husband for at least another ten days. I don't feel a strain in this and don't perceive what this will do to Ari. I don't admit my relief, even to myself. I'm relieved. But standing in white and bleeding makes me feel even more as if I am in a play, what if the people here knew I'm going through this whole ceremony and afterwards won't touch my husband, and this is not me, I'm not quite sure who I am inside of. I feel removed, watching, harboring a secret.

I stand in my grandmother's bedroom in my wedding gown, whispering words of psalms. I am fasting. I have been told that the day of a wedding can atone for a life, that it is to be spent in prayer and fasting until the nighttime celebration, but there is no prayer in my words as they flow from my mouth, no feeling in my body. I trust, as I've been taught since entering this Hasidic world, that the words alone will work their own holiness, or magic, as I float into this new place, I don't know how. I am swallowing myself whole. No sadness, I'm just anxious that my script for the wedding will come out right. No joy. I am really leaving you now, mother and father, sisters, even the Alperts. I don't need parents any more, this marriage is to be my new home. Around me an elaborate, slow, old dance unfolds.

The temperature has topped a hundred and ten all week. It was not possible to find a gown in Dallas that fit the Hasidic requirement, neck and arms have to be covered, and so we

bought a gown with a transparent neck and sleeves and had it fully lined; I am perspiring. I don't want to think right now of my grandmother and mother shopping for this gown with me, how their anger at one another shrinks me so, and mortified me in public. They live in that, and so they didn't notice. I went alone in a clandestine run to the mall for another pre-wedding rite, and bought a very simple, synthetic wig, straight out of the box, that makes me look like a mannequin. Ultra-orthodox married women must wear wigs, but I had no *shetl macher*, wig hairdresser, in Dallas, and no guidance as to what to do about it, given that my parents are not religious. I am sacrificing my appearance to my new, Hasidic God. The wig waits for me, for the morning after the wedding.

My mother and sisters move to the mirror to put on makeup and do their hair. I am embarrassed at my mother's sleeveless gown and urge her to don her bolero. She calls me to the mirror, asks me to sit. "I want to put your veil on you," she says, and I can't feel her pride, don't want to see the moistness in her eyes, it angers me, and I shrug it off. Put my veil on me? My gown should not be white, my innocence long gone. It should be blood red, it should be gray, it should be transparent. Instead, it cloaks me and I disappear.

I don't know that it will be years before I look at this scene again, and years before I can see that my mother's near tears were real, that she was helpless with the love she felt, inept with it always, that, many many times, she ran from it, but could never really get away. Many, many times I will run from it, Mom, and it's too hard to look at you now, the Hasidic life will help me to erase you for a very long time, I'll keep running until, years from now, I run straight into you.

But right now, I'm sure that she is also following a script, that of Proud Bereft Mother, and I sense no more feeling in her than I have in my floating self. We are all part of this dance, and I sit, and let her do it. She pins the veil to my head. My sisters are nearby, watching. Soon, I will disappear.

In my grandfather's study, the men gather, I must stay behind in my grandmother's bedroom, not to witness this sale of my being, and my mother is called to join them. Ari's mother is there, and the two stand together, to the side of the men. Someone turns on a tape recorder, Ari recites a Hasidic discourse, always a piece of holy text will ritualize a moment, and the men burst into song, clapping and rejoicing. Then Rabbi Lazarson produces the *ketubah*, the marriage contract, not an agreement between me and my new husband, no, I'm not even allowed to be there to sign my name, but an ancient contract formed between Ari and my father, he will give me to Ari for the bride price, the ring of gold, and the *ketubah* will be signed by two trusted male witnesses to the sale, two friends who share this new life with us.

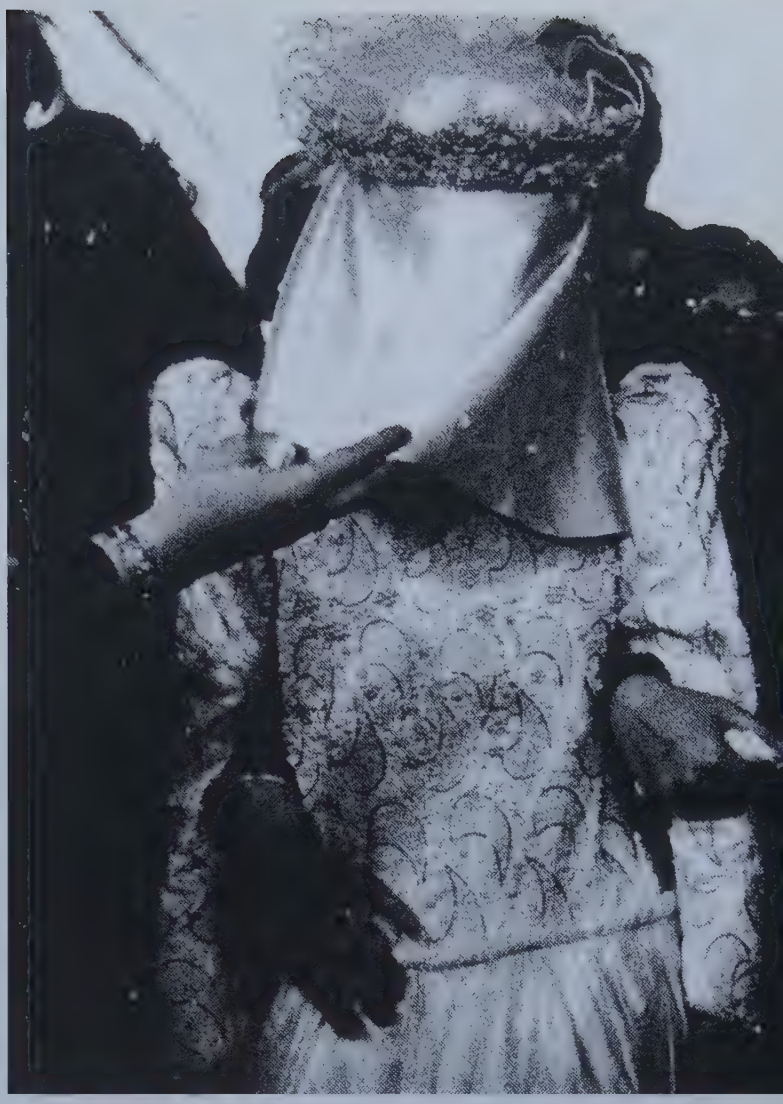
The rabbi writes my father's Hebrew name on the document, Yehoshua—"God will save." My father is dressed in a summer suit of light tan and he wears a white carnation that echoes his thick, white hair. He is handsome, thin, and his face… there is fear there, and confusion, near panic.

The two mothers are called forward to commemorate the destruction of the Temple by breaking a plate to mark this ceremony, the requisite admixture of loss in every Jewish joy, and no one notes this isn't necessary because there is already loss here, I'm already breaking. The photographer catches them with their right hands on the plate together, smiling, dressed in long gowns, just as they thrust it downward, they smile together, and don't you know, Mom, that the plate isn't the Temple, it's me, it's my marriage, it's my life with you, it's just another thing broken? Ari's father is distressed when the shards fly, and he scurries around the room, picking up the pieces.

> ARI, DID YOU LOOK ACROSS THE ROOM AND WANT ME, JOYFUL? PLEASE TELL ME YES, THAT AT LEAST ONE OF US HAD THAT.

But I don't know this, I'm in the next room, whispering psalms, left only with my hopes and prayers. My mother comes back, pleased, and my younger sister, Amy, comes in to tell me that my oldest friend has come early and wants to see me.

"Tell her that this is a time for prayer, and I will see her after the ceremony," I say, stuck to my timetable, my script, unable to feel. My friend will grieve this for years. She was my neighbor from the age of two, and her home was one of my havens, like the Alperts later. My oldest sister Debbie would open the back gate for me and let me into my friend's backyard, and leave me to knock on the door, there I am, a three-year-old alone on their stoop, knocking on the door, wanting to



play. Her mother, helpless, counted me as one of their family. No one came to fetch me. I became a household germ, sent home at the end of each day. But I sweep my friend away with all the other connections in my past life. The cutoff is here, at my wedding. It is important to start anew.

Now I sit in a chair in the living room. All the furniture has been removed from this large, sunny room, the drapes are open, the long, evening rays envelop us, and guests are all around me. Down one side of the room is a long buffet table covered with trays of food, no meat or cheese, all kosher, and the wood floor and wood paneling are shining. Just outside on the patio, the sliding glass door stands open, is the little Texas band I hired with my grandparents' money, one clarinet, one violin and a saxophone, preparing to play the Hasidic melodies I culled for them from old music books. In the other room, Ari waits with the rabbi who performs the privileged role of dressing the groom. He drapes a prayer shawl around Ari from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, it is old and worn, resonant with the prayers of a holy man. Over that goes Ari's first long, black Hasidic coat, a *satuk*. But something is wrong, the coat has been ordered according to measurements, but it doesn't fit him. Ari hunches his shoulders up and sucks in his stomach to try to close it, his back went out a week ago, he is in pain, and he forces himself into this new costume as he will always force himself. It's lucky he has his tuxedo for the reception.

From my chair set out in the middle of the guests, I look up and Ari is at the door flanked by his father and my father, each holding an arm. I see Ari framed by the doorway, caught in a photograph, his black beard, his thick eyebrows, the pain he holds in, the effort in his handsome face to hold onto the seriousness of this moment, it's that stiffness that I will come to know, and this is it, we haven't been allowed to see one another for the last week, and this is the moment. This is the moment when the bride is supposed to look up to see her groom coming toward her after their separation and feel the rush of seeing her beloved. The music begins in a meditative, minor tone, and behind Ari, Rabbi Lazarson and several others sing along in deep voices, and soon the desires of bride and groom are to be celebrated, legitimized, and then consummated. This is the wonder moment of recognition, when she is to look up and see him coming, to acknowledge her, to then proceed to the hoped-for wedding canopy. Ari, what were you feeling? Did you look across the room and want me, joyful? Please tell me yes, that at least one of us had that. Or were you also filled with the religious script, coaching yourself on what you were supposed to be thinking, supposed to be feeling, working to ignore pain? *Here is my helpmate, my soul, she will join me in creating an everlasting edifice, in bringing a new Jewish generation to the world. Our destiny.* You see such thoughts as loftier, more legitimate than the flash of desire, of tenderness, but if you did feel those things in this moment, if at least one of us could manage to feel, if you weren't robbed of feeling by fundamentalism, then, then, I'm so sorry that I had to disappoint you. I led you into this marriage, this place.

But, really, at this moment I almost don't see Ari, I note his discomfort in the coat and wince at that, another secret beneath the costume, hope nobody knows. I'm thinking about the show, willing everything to fall in place. I'm watching my father.

On either side of my chair are the two mothers, holding long, tapered candles. The men walk toward me pacing to the slow music, backed by a baritone/bass wall of voices, and I'm watching my father, sinking. He is supposed to place his hands on my head and bless me with the words, "May God make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah," the four noble mothers of the Jewish people. I coached him on this several days ago for too brief a time, amid so much, and I know I'm hoping for the impossible. The two fathers stand with Ari in front of me now, the music pauses, in my memory of this I can't see Ari, the crowd is gathered around us, and I look up to my father, wishing he could do this and so much else, for me. The pho-

tographer snaps the picture as I meet my father's eyes. I whisper, "Daddy? The words?" He places his hand on my head, he remembers that much, his motion is stiff with fear and shame, and I feel everything as if it is mine, and he leans over and kisses my forehead, leaves it wet.

This is my last moment of feeling, I don't know why, I just know that the way I could look at him and his pain and fear became mine, that way I *felt* him, I cut away after this moment, this kiss, the love that shames me. From the point of my marriage, he becomes my secret burden, old dead package that I carry behind my neck, and I feel absolutely nothing for him, disdain his incapacities, hate the history that hovers over him, until his death. This is the end. I lost him long ago and now I am replacing him, long overdue, with Ari, the Rebbe, with God. But the music swells, Ari is looking into my face in his glorious moment while I am looking at my father, and Ari reaches forward to lift and then lower the veil that hangs from my crown behind me, he lifts it and brings it down in front of my face. He has ascertained that he has received the right merchandise, no trickery of the biblical Leah, who put herself in her sister's place beneath a veil. It is me, and he believes this with joy, but I have tricked you, Ari. This is not my sister, I've put the woman you see in front of you here in place of me. It's the same trickery, you see? Leah has replaced Lisa, who can't fully love you, who will muster desire, who carries both her sisters with her, and you don't know. You think you are marrying the woman you love.

Triumphant, Ari proceeds with the two fathers through the open, glass door to the wedding canopy. My sisters follow, carrying candles, and then me with the two mothers. The patio still radiates the heat of the day, although it is covered with a white, open tent and laced with ivy. The guests move into their outdoor seats.

I look up, and there is Ari and Rabbi Lazarson under the canopy. I must go to him. I must go to my husband. It is time. In a daze now, I pace down the aisle, the guests disappear, and then I walk slowly around him seven times, the rabbi whispers the numbers to me, and Ari's mother carries my train so that it doesn't wrap around her son's feet. Seven circles for the seven heavens, for the days of Sabbath, all revolving now around my husband. Then I stand beside him, and we proceed. The marriage contract, the seven blessings, the lift of the veil to sip the wine, the placing of the ring on my index finger, my purchase, the stomping of a glass.

We will dance until midnight, the band will let loose, round and round, women indoors, men under the patio tent, and the guests will thrill at the exuberance here and talk about their experience for weeks. Here is Ana, dancing, she came with an "escort" who will become her husband. Here is Andrea, she will marry Ari's former roommate in another week, and they will shuck off this flirt with Hasidic life. Here are my dear, dear friends from high school and before, another Andrea, Sharon and David, like siblings and you are happy for me, my friends, and you don't know that this wedding is your cutoff. You will never really have me again. Soon, the women pull me outside to dance on the expansive lawn, and I grab their hands and join the circle, then I raise one hand and fling my arm in the dance.

HERE IS ANDREA. SHE WILL MARRY ARI'S FORMER ROOMMATE AND THEY WILL SHUCK OFF THIS FLIRT WITH HASIDIC LIFE.

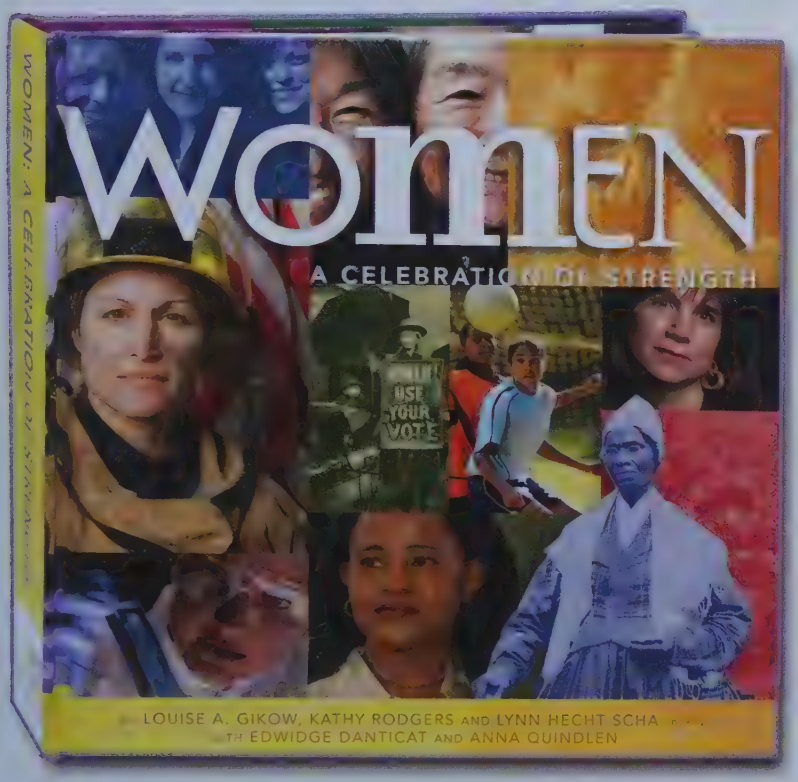
The wedding ring, still on my index finger, flies away and nestles in the grass. It is nighttime. We continue dancing. What can you do but look for it tomorrow? No matter, it is time to dance. The ring sinks deep into the green carpet. For all I know, it's still there.

I take a break to get a drink, go to the back room where I last whispered psalms as an unmarried girl, that girl is gone now, and here in my memory, my mother and father, two sisters, and Ari, all appear. My father says to me, "Did you find your ring?" my first guilty secret as a married woman, no, not my first, but this is the first nervous glance at Ari, right here. For the first time I will feel the sway of his disapproval, subject myself to that, acting out my role. He frowns at me, he is angry, and I feel I've failed, a new sensation before him, an introduction. But we are back at the dance and here is the rabbi's young wife, confident, head high, in charge, whirling expert in this Hasidic dance, and sister Amy, sixteen and already forming tracks on her arm, she's smiling, and Debbie, who will catch my tossed bouquet. Here is Rabbi Lazarson, the beard and fringes fly, arms up high, he is stocky, but his feet, what they can do. He dances with my grandfather's business associate, a stiff, Baptist man, and the photographer catches the odd pairing. Everyone here will remember this night and the fun, the music, the dancing. The joy. ■

***Leah Lax's** forthcoming memoir,* When Time Becomes a Woman, *tells of finding a home among the Lubavitcher Hasidim, and of gradual sexual awareness and closeted homosexuality. It is an exploration of the drive for the spiritual, and of what fundamentalism does to a woman's mind. Lax is the co-creator, with Janice Rubin, of The Mikvah Project, documenting the intimate experience of mikvah across America. www.mikvahproject.com*

# *Women: A Celebration of Strength*

By Louise A Gikow, Kathy Rodgers and Lynn Hecht Schafran
with Edwidge Danticat and Anna Quindlen


WOMEN
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# SNAPSHOTS

*Fiction by* MICHAL GOVRIN
*Translated from the Hebrew by* BARBARA HARSHAV

When the call came from Alain, it took me a while to make out who was talking. The strained voice (as if he hadn't stopped running since that night) obscured the reserve I remembered.

"Ilana was killed in an accident on the Strasbourg-Munich autobahn. Yes, she was driving alone, at night, to lecture at an architects' convention... I went with the boys to the funeral in Haifa...," he managed to say before his voice cracked.

I didn't really understand what he was talking about, through the screen of shock. He called me. The first one he thought of. Because of the language, of course.

"Personal notes… were in her handbag… everything in Hebrew. It will take me years to decipher. You know, our personal abyss… Yes, the sooner the better, Tir-sa… tomorrow, if you can…"

And then, the next afternoon: the apartment at the top of the tower, among the other buildings of the construction site on the Seine. And the distant gleam of Pont Mirabeau capering at the bottom of the glass wall, behind Alain's back outlined in the armchair. He practically didn't budge the whole time. Becoming a black negative etched on my pupils.

Alain Greenenberg. Ilana's husband. Historian. Scholar of the Holocaust. As I remembered him from our single, fleeting encounter. Fair hair slewed to the side, his look pensive. Coming out of the café as I came in to meet Ilana. Apologizing politely, departing with a quick handshake.

He greeted me at the door with the same tweed jacket and the same remote courtesy. Drops his hands, doesn't seem to know what to add beyond the few bits of information. (Less than half an hour. Almost no word of the accident, or the sons, or their plans now. And I, facing him, imprisoned in the inanity of routine words.) "About one in the morning, according to the police. In the Black Forest. Killed instantly. The ambulance took her to Paris. We buried her, as she would surely have wanted, in Haifa."

Then he placed a bundle in my hands, "Here, Tir-sa."

The only time he looked straight at me, and for a moment pain gaped from his pallid face.

"Lana's notes. You'll know what to do with them."

May 21, 1991. Sitting across the living room table. And only the scrunch of Alain's eyebrows hints at what wasn't said explicitly. Then we stood up, Lana's file of notes in my hands, the gleam darting from the bend of the river erasing the dusk of Alain's face. Next to the stereo was the CD of *Don Giovanni*. Alain dropped the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* on top of it, pointing to the door. We passed the open door of his study. Cartons of documents, piles of paper, photographs I couldn't identify upside-down. We walked in silence, first me, then his mute steps.

The little I knew of him came from Ilana. "Born in Czernovitz. A child in the war… " That's how she summed up the components of his life, the story of their complicated marriage (the presence of absence, all that was silenced), his double life in that international group of historians, attorneys, prosecutors—mostly Jews, taciturn, survivors like him, always on the move, tracking down aging war criminals with fake identities, budding neo-Nazi organizations. Fascist cells, assemblies, publications, websites. Revisionism, denial, obliteration of history. Money laundering, cooperation with the international terror network, the disease fomenting under the roots of Europe, spreading to America, the Third World. They gather evidence, catalogue.

And then we were standing at the door. He held his hand out to me and said, "I'm not sure if I'll be able to help, Tir-sa… but if you have any questions, you can get in touch, of course… " His look still gaping, as if he were about to add something.

Then he quickly lowered his eyes, "Goodbye Tir-sa," he brushed aside the hair that had dropped, and retreated to the door with an embarrassed bow, before I turned to the elevator.

In the sinking elevator Ilana's profile hovered before me, flickering through the mane of black curls, looking into the distance. As then, the last time we met, when she landed in Paris in late December, before the Gulf War, on her way back from America, before she went with her sons to Jerusalem. We sat on the glass terrace of the café near the Centre Pompidou. Her hair caught the winter light, surrounding her with a halo that enhanced the sculpted beauty of her face. The full lower lip, the wide, doe-like, almost haunted look that lent her a new softness. She said a few words about her parting from Alain, "I think this time it's the end," and fell silent. Gazing at something with empty eyes.

As the elevator door opened, it occurred to me that in fact this was the first time I had been in her apartment. And all trace of her seemed already obliterated. As if somebody had seen to that.

Outside, in the shrill light on the marble plaza between the towers, the note that had gone on buzzing since Alain called, died down a little. I meandered back to the Metro between the pits and cranes of the construction site, over Pont Mirabeau

Ilana's radical leftist involvement, innovative plans, communes in Marseille, feminist architecture, international renown....

and the gray rippling rustle of the Seine, gripping her papers, Ilana's—Lana's—the object of my pounding heart all these years, under the casual disguise of our relationship. The two adolescent girlfriends from Haifa, brought together again, by fate, in Paris.

I never really dared to hope for a relation with her. Not even during the twenty years we both spent in the City of Light. She certainly didn't know that I had emigrated, and I kept my distance, keeping track of her through rumors—outstanding student of architecture at the Technion in Haifa ("That's an inheritance, to build and be rebuilt by it…"), leaving Israel because of her radical leftist involvement, studies at the Beaux Arts. Then opening an office in Paris, the innovative plans, communes in Marseille, "Lodgings of Life," "Feminine Architecture," international renown, and a trail of gossip about her stormy life before and after her marriage to Alain. And her two sons, six-year-old David, and Jonathan born after we reconnected three summers ago. For a whole hour, I hesitated in a store in Montparnasse about what gift to buy, standing intoxicated among the baby clothes and the toys: I, a skinny, childless woman whose only structure in life was a position as professor of narratology in the literature department of the Sorbonne, the appointment I paid for with many hours of bending over manuscripts, and honing the sting of my style.

All those years in Paris, I didn't try to wipe out the distance between us. I hid behind the embarrassment left over from the camaraderie we believed existed once, "in the Youth Movement." Now and then I'd come across a picture of a field trip to Mount Arbel: Lana at the top of the cliff, against a backdrop of the valley of the Sea of Galilee and the mountains of Bashan, legs slightly straddled, with her bold beauty, laughing hugged in the arms of the counselor, her boyfriend for the last two days, who looks at her confused by the realization of his dream of hugging her. And on the bottom step of the rock, smiling with eyeglasses, me, a backward little girl, on my first field trip with the Movement, not really understanding my role in the relationship above me, just grateful to Ilana for inviting me to be in the picture. I'm completely lost in the dry landscape I was thrown into from the "Gomulka Aliyah" from Poland in the '60s—the temporary apartment downtown, the unpacked cartons, Father trying to fit in as an engineer at the shipyards at the port, talking about Gdansk, and Mother who went to the market in the lower city, and fled home from the "Levantine coarseness" to the fine china from Poland.

And then our meeting by chance five years ago at the opening of an exhibition in the Musée Galiera. Her dazzling beauty that had deepened with the years, sailing toward me through the crowd of guests: "Tirtsa? Tirtsa Weintraub? I don't believe it!" she wound her arms around me, holding me to her tiny, perfect body, flooding me with the ring of her laughter.

And the bursts of joy ever since. Something of that distant youthful intoxication, or the nameless joy after we got back in touch, the tremor at hearing Ilana's voice declaring in the receiver, once or twice a year, at the end of one of her trips,

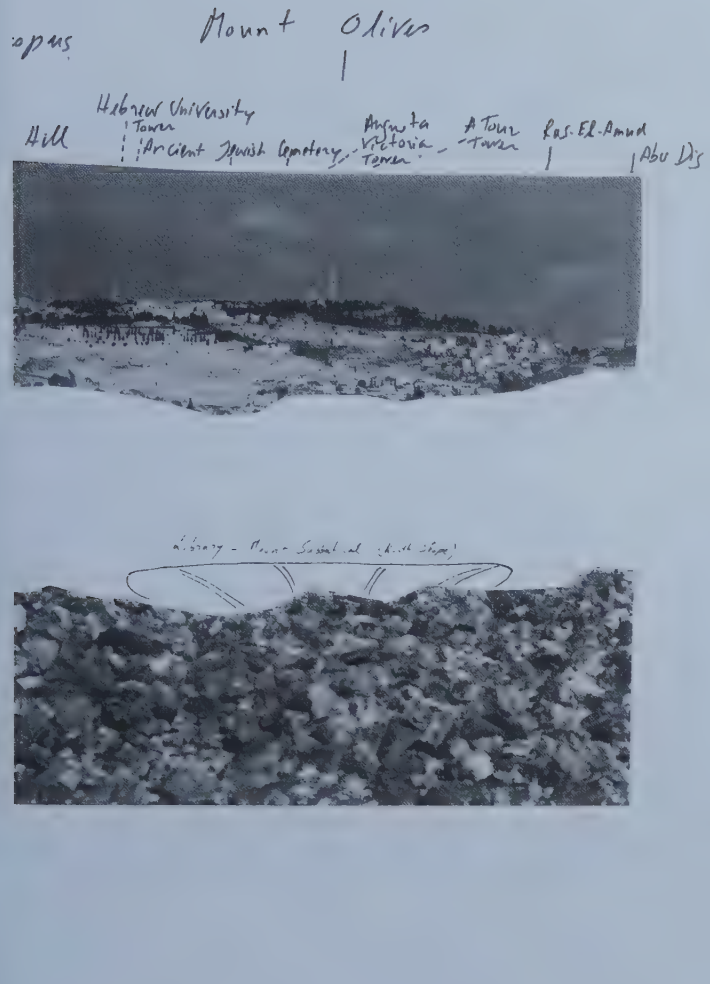
"Tirtsa! My second phone call in Paris!"

Summoning me, "I'm dying to see you, Tirtsa…"

And I become addicted to waiting. Gulping the days, the hours until we meet. And the meetings, ending not long after the joy of hugging and shouting in Hebrew, and the taste of family she seemed to need enough to keep making dates. And after a little quick chatter, she'd jump up from her chair, cascades of black hair and a dazzling smile, and announce she had to run. Gathers up her handbag (the one she had with her on her last journey), hugs me and leaves me alone, facing the cup imprinted with her lipstick.

Ilana's father, Aaron Tsuriel, I remembered from my few visits to their apartment back in high school, when he'd linger next to me and declare with a soft smile: "Tirtsa, the dreamer, Tirtsa, as Herzl says, if you want it it is no dream." In my eyes he became the exemplar of the "Pioneers"—those tough old people, with burned faces, bony gestures, hewn Hebrew. The generation of Titans.

Her mother I almost didn't remember, except for a later meeting in the Carmel post office. I was on leave from the army, surviving with foggy senses the months of complete oblit-




eration at the base in the Negev. And suddenly, Ilana's mother, in a flowery summer dress and a cloth hat,

"Where in Poland does your family come from?"

"Gdansk. Originally Warsaw. During the war my parents escaped to the Urals. My brother and I were born there…" The words burst out of me through a crust of silence.

"I'm from Warsaw, too," she said excitedly. "I left home at twenty-one. With the Youth Movement. Father and Mother were ultra-Orthodox. They wept, but they gave me their blessing… Father had a butcher shop, in the market of Warsaw. Katz. The Katz family. All of them were killed…" She thrusts her face covered with age spots and freckles. And then it was her turn at the counter.

How could I imagine what would burst out of Lana's pages. The little bit about her mother. And all that had been hidden, all the years, between her and her father.

I found out about Sayyid only from reading. I should have guessed. Her great excitement this last year about the binational performance at the cornerstone-laying ceremony on the site of "Mount Sabbatical."

I probably refused to listen. As when she'd casually mention others, in one sequence with her stories about the trips, and the projects, and the prizes, and mischievous descriptions of her sons. I protected myself, apparently. Kept my own Ilana, one who didn't disturb the sediment of my yearning too much.

Now a few words about the notes: the fragmentary nature of Lana's legacy ("snapshots," as she put it) made it very hard to decipher (even though that's clearly not the only reason for my continued long involvement with the material). With the limited means of my old Hebrew computer program, I tried to find a fragmentary layout, smiling at myself for the tension between form and content—"my professional expertise."

I have also prepared for publication, as an appendix, some preliminary drafts for "The Settlement of Huts" and "Mount Sabbatical," the last monument (or "anti-monument," as she put it) she worked on. Everything that was in the file of "snapshots."

On the CD Don Giovanni plays. "Lana's music." I'm changing the movements of the opera back and forth. And someday I'll have to talk about my life, too. But not here.

The expression that comes to mind: "Sincere charity" may fit. Only Lana's "snapshots" here, as she herself prepared them for delivering. She still had time for that. ■

*Excerpt from the new novel* Snapshots *by* ***Michal Govrin****, by arrangement with Riverhead, a member of Penguin Group (USA), Inc., Copyright © 2002 by Michal Govrin. Translation copyright © 2007 by Penguin Group (USA) Inc.*

# Jewish Women's Salons

## Bring back the power of conversation

**Lilith magazine, the print "salon" for Jewish women's conversations for nearly three decades, is now extending the excitement of Lilith into real-time talk.**

A Lilith salon is more free-flowing than a book club, not as spiritual as a rosh hodesh group nor as democratic as the PTA, and more intimate than a lecture. Lilith salons are gatherings where a people meet in a home for an evening of good talk, refreshment, and renewed energy. Each salon has a "trigger" topic pegged to the latest issue of Lilith, but the conversation moves in whatever directions you take it.

Participants rave about the experience:

"Thanks so much for a wonderful and soulwarming evening. What went on in the Lilith salon is rare and precious, as evidenced by the intensity and excitement of the participants."

***"We got into a fabulous discussion of the article on Our Bodies Ourselves. The talk morphed into what girls think of feminism today, and why does Lilith say 'frankly feminist' on the cover?"***

***"Such a diverse and fascinating group of Lilith readers; the oldest was in her 80s and the youngest in her 20s."***

To launch a Lilith salon in your own living room, gather a list of about a dozen of your friends and contact salons@Lilith.org. We'll provide conversation starters and suggestions from women who have hosted Lilith salons. (If some of your friends aren't already subscribers, they can take care of this important detail at Lilith.org, or by calling 1-888-2-LILITH.)

If you belong to a Women of Reform Judaism sisterhood, suggest to your president that the sisterhood start a WRJ/Lilith Salon.

And in case you are lucky enough to live where a Lilith salon is launching, we'll try to match you up. Salons@Lilith.org.

Florine Stettheimer, saloniére, Portrait of Myself (detail), 1923.

# Bring in the Show

Celebrating nearly 30 years of charting Jewish women's lives with exuberance, rigor, clairvoyance, subversion, and tenderness, Lilith has created a stunning exhibition featuring the fresh ideas and germinal writers this magazine has published.

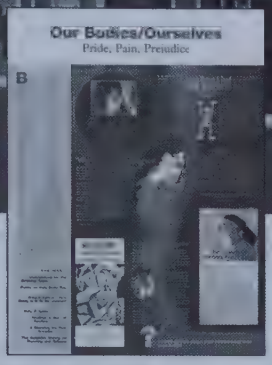
You know that Lilith brings new ideas and interpretations of the zeitgeist before they become cover stories in other news magazines: "J.A.P.-baiting" on college campuses; Jewish women's eggs for test-tube babies; "forgotten" women writers; the misconduct of rabbis; the pleasures of women's philanthropy; navigating interfaith families; and much, much more.

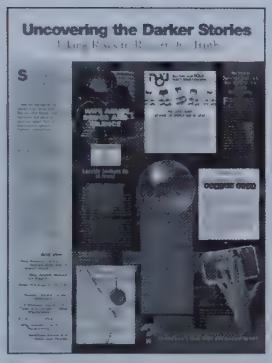
In 10 lively and revealing wall panels, the exhibition explores women's dramatic new roles in Jewish ritual and as rabbis and cantors, the changing face of Jewish organizations, intimate relationships, new feminist scholarship, and more. The exhibition comes complete with gorgeous illustrations and covers from the magazine.

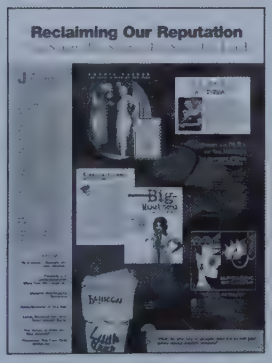
**Lilith Magazine: The Voice of Jewish Women** has played to crowds in New York, Washington, Boca Raton, Cincinnati, the Jersey shore and more.

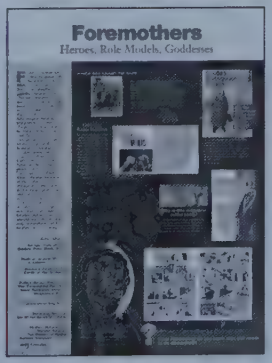
To bring the exhibition to your community, campus or JCC, and to find out how Lilith will help you create local programs to complement the show, email info@Lilith.org or call 1-888-2-LILITH.

To see more samples of the wonderful wall panels that are part of this exhibition, visit www.Lilith.org.

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### EVENTS

A list of lectures, readings, conferences and other Lilith-related happenings

# ECO-USHPIZIN: WOMEN TAKE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

## *A Sukkot Invitation*

Sukkot is an equinox holiday—day and night are equal, all is in balance;
its purpose is to encourage us to pause in life before the onset of winter.
The Torah enjoins Jews to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and to
build fragile "sukkot" in which to dwell seven days.
The ceremonial use of these booths came from the custom of
farm workers' building little huts in the fields so they could rest,
protected from the midday sun.
At the height of the harvest, workers also spent their nights there.

At Sukkot, our autumn holidays come to an end, and then,
a day later, we scroll all the way back to the start of the Bible:
"In the beginning, God created heaven and earth."

The sukkah is a frail shelter that can easily be buffeted by rain and wind,
but the liturgy specifically instructs us to "sit there."
Why should we be enjoined to sit in an inadequate shelter?
Because true shelter resides not in stronger walls, not in more square feet,
but in being in harmony with what *is*, in feeling connected to life,
and its inexorable processes.
We "sit there" as well to understand nature—where the harvest came from,
that huge natural processes sustain us.

There is a tradition of inviting mystical guests—known as *ushpizin*—
into one's sukkah, one per night:
Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron and David.
We rejoice in the fruits of our harvest,
and that makes us feel particularly welcoming and hospitable.
*But hold it.* Where are the women?

**In the following pages, Lilith invites them in.**
**These are women who have really "sat there" in sukkot,**
**and they bring back timely messages:**
***Connecting with the earth, protecting it, is a religious value.***

If it's not your tradition to build a sukkah, take these pages, and clothespins,
to a public park. Pin them on trees—they can be your sukkah.
Add a song, a reading and our guests, as well as yours—*eco-ushpizin.*

*Rabbi Susan Schnur*

## **TRUCK FARMER:** Esther Mandelheim Elliott, 28

*With husband Pablo, she runs Stoney Lonesome Farm and its "eat local" CSA (Community Supported Agriculture Program) on 91 acres in Gainesville, Virginia.*

**I lived in St. Petersburg until I was nine,** and my earliest memories are of playing in the woods—with acorns, sticks, weeds. I could spend a whole day with myself examining "pieces of dirt." I am very nostalgic for that. In the early fall, my grandmother—we called her Babulya—would take us to pick mushrooms near the Finnish border. There were swamps and cranberry bogs; the smells were so earthy. After my family moved to America, I went twice back to Russia to go up the river in my uncle's little boat. We smoked our own fish and ate wild blueberries. It was very satisfying.

In New York, my parents sent me to *yeshiva*. In Russia there was such a climate of fear that we were deprived of Jewish knowledge. But in America, in school, Judaism took root at the core of my being—it became my guide for everyday things, large and small. In college, for the first time, I was able to begin putting together Jewish observance and a passion for nature. Pablo, a friend from Vassar, invited me to stay on his family's farm—it was very neglected—and help him start a CSA. We became boyfriend and girlfriend, Pablo converted, and we were married under a full moon.

Our CSA is in its fourth year. We have 85 members. Membership is $490 a year; $440 if you help with the farm work. In the spring, members get lettuces and greens, herbs, cool weather vegetables. In the summer we harvest zucchini, potatoes, garlic, onions, dill, rosemary, cukes, peppers, tomatoes, eggplants, zinnias and sunflowers. In the fall we pick cabbage and winter squashes, carrots, kale and other leafy greens. Everything is delivered the day it is picked. You could not eat any fresher. It is a tremendous amount of work for us, and this year, our fourth, we are, finally, almost breaking even.

Pablo and I are still very much learning. Should we scale back the CSA? Host people to work the farm? Move towards bio-intensive farming? We both have, more generally, a deep interest in education. Can we combine farming in some way with teaching? Our goal, of course, is to make a living without killing ourselves in the process.

Shabbat and the Jewish holidays sustain us. It is so healthy to stop working. If we didn't rest and feel spiritually renewed, the exhaustion—physical and mental—would be too much. Shabbat enhances our ability to farm, and farming highlights for us the importance of Shabbat, and of Judaism more generally. It's challenging being observant—this year, both Rosh Hashanah and Sukkot fall on our CSA distribution days—but it is also our observance that propels us forward. Rosh Hodesh, Sukkot, the lunar calendar, the first full moon after our season ends—these are "organic" markers for us. We are discovering not only back-to-the-land farming, but back-to-the-land Judaism.

—*as told to Susan Schnur.*

Esther, whom would you like to invite into Lilith's sukkah?
Friends whom I've fed through their pregnancies—that's been amazing. Also, Blu Greenberg, the well-known Orthodox feminist. She's honest about the effort involved in making Shabbat and the holidays happen.

Who's a significant role model?
My mother. She wasn't born Jewish, but she has clung to the Jewish people. She's a wonderful cook, a seamstress, a weaver, a baker. She has a green thumb. She's my model of simple living.

What shakes your lulav?
The deep ethical concept from Torah to be a *caretaker* of the Earth, not an owner.

The Earth is a fragile sukkah. What one act of repair can we undertake?
Grow a vegetable.

Tzipi, whom would you like to invite into Lilith's sukkah?
Children, of course. Let me start at home by inviting Nir and Noa, who are six, and Ron, who is eight.

Who's a significant role model?
Yehudit Naot. She was Minister of the Environment under Ariel Sharon, and she actively lobbied for the position—other Ministers of the Environment just got stuck with it. Her advocacy made me realize that I, too, could do something significant, like help found an organization.

What shakes your lulav?
Fighting for Israel's Clean Air Act, which is now in its third round of negotiations.

The Earth is a fragile sukkah. What one act of repair can we undertake?
Help one child understand how everything that she or he does—ride a bicycle, make trash, hang laundry on a clothesline—affects our environment.

## **LEGAL EAGLE:** Tzipi Iser Itzik, 38

*Across the pond in Israel, she defends air and water.*

**I was working as a lawyer for 10 years when I got pregnant** with my first child, Ron, and suddenly became very ill with intestinal and urinary problems and overall weakness and malaise. I saw in the newspaper that a local plant had contaminated the wells in Herzliya, and so I stopped drinking the water. My symptoms disappeared. If I hadn't been pregnant—thinking about the health of my child as well as my own—I don't think I would have experienced this environmental connection as such an awakening.

I left my law firm, and helped found *Adam Teva v'Din* ("People, Nature and the Law"), also called the Israel Union for Environmental Defense. I'm the Executive Director. We lead the field in fighting for environmental issues—clean air and water, sustainable development—and in bringing issues and lawsuits before the Knesset and the Supreme Court. We have 30 employees—lawyers, clerks, scientists, environmental specialists—and more than 4000 members. Right now the Knesset is debating the Israeli version of the Clean Air Act—*Adam Teva v'Din* drafted the original version—and it is, of course, very controversial. People want Israel to be an environmentally safe place to live, but there is also the economy. We are an industrial nation; Israel's financial health matters very much.

Ironically, perhaps, the issues that *Adam Teva v'Din* helps bring before the Knesset are often the only ones that both secular and religious members of parliament can agree on! *Adam Teva v'Din* has many publications, and we quote liberally from the Bible, using it as a text that impels us—culturally, historically and religiously—to act with environmental responsibility. I'm not personally religious—most of us working for the environment are secular—but many members of the Knesset are religious, and we need to be inclusive, to get them to step on board with these issues, too.

There is no question that my commitment to environmental causes comes not only from being a lawyer, but from motherhood. I think that many of us who are female professionals do what we do because of our children—we want a better world for them, whether that be societally, legally, or environmentally. Israel is a very child-positive culture; being a parent is a very important cultural value. My professional skills and experience are my greatest assets, but what drives me are my children.

*—as told to Melanie Weiss.*

## **FRYING-PAN BODHISATTVA:** Betsy Teutsch, 54

*She models mindful consumption in a world that says "buy, buy, buy."*

**Not long ago, my father died**—he was a frugal, modest guy—and I came into some money. Woo. I needed to think about what to do with this money, and it struck me, even though our culture encourages constant material acquisition, that I really had everything I needed. I started www.moneychangesthings.blogspot.com to mull it all over, to write about my personal decision-making processes when it comes to buying, and to write about wanting to be part of the "solution"—I can afford it.

For some years, for example, I had wanted a Prius, kind of as a "vanity item," and because I felt embarrassed to be seen driving around in my mini-SUV, a 1999 Subaru Forrester. It really made no sense for me to get rid of the Forrester, though—it had only logged 50,000 miles. I decided, instead of the Prius, to drive as little as possible, and to keep track of my mileage. Over time, I "localized" my life, relocating my hairdresser, doctor, masseuse and bank. I biked, walked, used mass transit and ride-pooled—the latter is pleasantly social—and got my mileage down to 2500 miles a year. People in my circumstances can edit their lives enormously, without sacrificing quality-of-life. And the act of editing is a very spiritual one, because you're saying, "I have what I need."

I blogged about my decision to buy a second frying pan—it took me 25 years to give myself permission to do that!—and about how the purchase made a huge difference to me. I didn't have to wait until one whole batch of schnitzel was finished before I could start the next one. You can spend $15 and really experience a quality-of-life improvement; buying a second house may not contribute as much to your sense of well-being.

Recycling bins in Israel also interested me. They are standard in most neighborhoods, and are huge, room-sized cages made of wire, with holes the width of a bottle. You just plop your recyclables in there. In Tel Aviv, people have turned them into works of art, with mosaic tiles, hamsas and wild things.

In 2003, I co-launched Freecycle.org in Philadelphia, an online community of people who need things and people who want to divest themselves of things. Everything is free. There is an immense amount of surplus in our culture. People get rid of boats, laptops, pianos, unused Nordic tracks. When you upgrade your camera, what do you do with your old digital one? Sometimes I think: How did all this *stuff* wind up in my house, most of it uninvited?

I also blogged about my husband's mother, Hilda, a German refugee (she came to this country in 1939) who was frugal and never wasteful—habits that put me off at first; Americans really look down at thrift. I realized at some point, though, that I had *become* her. I save all the rubber bands that the mail comes in, and when I had a huge pile recently, I returned them to the post office. "Do people do this?" I asked the clerk at the counter. "You're the first in 10 years," she said.

*—as told to Susan Schnur.*

Betsy, whom would you like to invite into Lilith's sukkah?
Juliet Schorr, who wrote *The Overworked American* and *The Overspent American.* She describes voluntary simplicity. Fifty percent of gifts go right into the closet and are never used. Did you know that?

Who's a significant role model?
My friend, Meenal Raval, who is further along the path than I am. She gets an idea—"this is the next thing I need to do." Currently she's retrofitting her house with solar panels.

What shakes your lulav?
Dual-flush toilets. They're common in Israel, but they're hard to procure here.

The Earth is a fragile sukkah. What one act of repair can we undertake?
Get out of your car.

## **VEGGIE PIONEER:** Dr. Roberta Kalechofsky, 76

*Writer, public speaker, the brains behind Micah Publications (www.micahbooks.com.), the source for Jewish vegetarian and animal rights books.*

**I was raised in Brooklyn by carnivores.** As a teenager, I would tell my boyfriends, "Please, no steak. Mom cooks it three times a week." There was one vegetable in my childhood: overcooked string beans. And one ingredient in salad: iceberg lettuce.

I started Micah Publications in 1978, and at first we published only fiction; I was very involved in the world of independent publishers. One day in 1983, I received an unsolicited manuscript called *Judaism and Vegetarianism* by a Richard Schwartz. I had no interest in the topic, but I believe in reading the first 25 pages of any submission—I feel it's a responsibility—and this author is describing the veal industry, how calves are raised in crates on "factory farms."

I call my kosher butcher immediately. "I want you to listen to this," and I read him a few paragraphs. "This guy's got to be crazy," I tell him. "Isn't the whole point of *kashrut* that animals are raised humanely and slaughtered humanely?" "No," he says. "All meat raised for commercial markets is raised the same way. We just kill the animals differently." "Then this meat was never kosher and never will be," I said. That was it. I became an instant vegetarian.

One thing led to another. I published Richard's book, and I became very active in the North American Jewish Vegetarian Society. We used to meet in the Catskills at The Vegetarian Hotel, which is no longer there. I educated myself on how to become a good cook—I really had to, it was a new regime, and otherwise I would have had rebels on my hands, my husband and children. I've written and edited many books, including *Hagaddah for the Liberated Lamb*—there's a beautiful gift edition on purple linen, as well as the paperback; *The Jewish Vegetarian Year Cookbook*, which is vegan; *Rabbis and Vegetarianism: An Evolving Tradition*; and an anthology, *Judaism and Animal Rights: Classical and Contemporary Responses*, which has 41 articles by rabbis, doctors, veterinarians and activists. My interests grew to involve everything that has to do with food: food labeling, politics, gene-tampering, nutrition.

Micah Publications sells two bumper stickers: "Vegetarianism is an Affordable Health Plan" and "Real Environmentalists Don't Eat Meat." They get to the heart of the issue, which is that healthcare costs will always be high if people continue to eat the wrong things, and environmental costs will always be high because the meat industry puts a tremendous strain on the earth's resources. Cattle contribute more to global warming than automobiles do. For me, organic means "God's plan."

If I were Neanderthal, I'd write for Neanderthals. But I'm a Jew—Jews possess the longest history of meditations on the ethics of diet. Who should be more involved in these issues than us? Our values oblige us to be involved—because of our history, because of justice, because this is the best diet for poor people.

*—as told to Susan Schnur.*

Roberta, whom would you like to invite into Lilith's sukkah?
My bubbe. I used to sit on her porch in Brooklyn eating bags of *gribenes* [chicken skin] and *schmaltz*. She'd save them for me. What did we know from diet or exercise?

Who's been a significant role model?
David Rosen, the diplomat (and Orthodox rabbi) who engineered the Vatican's recognition of Israel. When people ask him why he's vegetarian, he says, "Because I'm a Jew."

What shakes your lulav?
Vegetarian eating and cooking are tremendous adventures.

The Earth is a fragile sukkah. What one act of repair can we offer?
As the saying goes, "Don't eat anything with a face."

## **OUTDOOR EDUCATOR:** Nili Simhai, 35

*Director of the Teva Learning Center, she teaches Judaism through the lens of nature.*

**I grew up in a Farsi-speaking family,** first in Israel, then Teheran, and finally in Cleveland, where I attended a Hebrew Day School. I was one of those kids who just always taught Hebrew on the side. I loved being Jewish. Another part of me was passionate about nature; nothing made me happier than being with my cats in our little suburban backyard. I majored in Wildlife Management at Ohio State, and my folks thought I was crazy. "This is not a career," was my father's line. "It's a hobby." I assumed I'd get a doctorate and do research, but then one summer I taught at a nature center. "This is it," I thought. "I was meant to teach."

So there I was, *shomer Shabbat* [an observant Jew], flipping through an environmental job catalogue and thinking, "If *only* I could combine this with being Jewish!" I literally turned the page at that moment, and there it was: "Jewish Environmental Educators Wanted." And that's how I got to Teva. I've been here 10 years.

At Teva, we teach Jewish studies—the holidays, prayer, Jewish values—in contact with God's creation. Teva does weeklong and Shabbat retreats—for Jewish Day Schools, for groups of bar/bat mitzvah kids, for families; synagogue life is no longer just "Hebrew School" or "Men's Clubs." We teach about 3000 people a year—in the summer in Cold Spring, New York, in the fall in Falls Village, Connecticut, and in the spring we move the whole show to Baltimore. We sponsor a four-day conference every year, and we send educators out to whomever wants us. At the height of our year, we have 18 to 20 people teaching, most of them 20-somethings. We've grown into being such a rich and supportive community.

The sort of thing we do is, say, blindfold students and then walk them to a scenic overlook. "Say the first word that comes to your mind," we instruct them, and then we whip off the blindfold. "Wow." "Oooohhh." "Spectacular!" We let them soak it in for a little while. Then we say, "Did you know there's a traditional *bracha* [prayer] for moments of awe like this?" At that moment one of two things happens: Either something comes alive for them in Judaism, or something comes alive for them in nature.

At Gesher Jewish Day School in Fairfax, Virginia, we're constructing a curriculum that can be used outdoors for teaching everything—Mishna, science, *tefilla* [prayer]. We're planting a "*Hagim* [holidays], Shabbat and Havdalah Garden"—the Havdalah one full of herbs; the Shabbat one full of different flowers. And we have a Rosh HaShana curriculum tied to composting—teaching *tshuva* [repentance] through parallels with the compost bin. Jewish biblical and Talmudic texts are just stuffed with agriculture and nature.

The ripple effect—I really believe in it. You teach people, they go out into the world and teach people, and then these people teach people, and on and on into new communities. We all work from such a place of joy. I think the synergy of faith and nature makes you joyful.

*—as told to Susan Schnur.*

Nili, whom would you like to invite into Lilith's sukkah?
Rabbi Fred Scherlinder Dobb. He was walking across the country as part of an interfaith group whose mission it was to raise environmental awareness. I was in 11th grade. He stopped at a local shul to give a talk. Some part of my mind never forgot this.

Who's been a significant role model?
Whoever wrote, "Vocation is where the heart's deep gladness meets the world's deep hunger."

What shakes your lulav?
Once I was backpacking and I found this huge purple caterpillar that did backflips when you held it in your hand. I was exhausted and hungry, but I shouted a *bracha* [prayer]. It was the most real prayer I ever said in my life.

The Earth is a fragile sukkah. What one act of repair can we offer?
Take a hike on *Shabbos* and say a prayer—either a traditional one, or one you make up yourself.

## **ACTIVIST/EXECUTIVE:** Barbara Lerman-Golomb, 48

*Lifelong volunteer, she brings eco-consciousness to synagogues.*

Barbara, whom would you like to invite into Lilith's sukkah?
My mother. In the 1950's, she had three natural childbirths when it was unheard of. She was progressive in a lot of ways. Also, Rachel Carson.

Who's a significant role model?
Nachman of Bratslav, the 18th-century Hasidic rebbe. He gets it: He prayed out-of-doors.

What shakes your lulav?
The Garden of Eden. Also, Brooklyn, where I gave up my car, use the public park, and live in much less square-footage than I did in the suburbs. Our family's carbon footprint is heading towards neutral.

The Earth is a fragile sukkah. What one act of repair can we undertake?
Go online and figure out your carbon footprint. It's easy and fun. Then multiply that number by everyone on the planet, and see how many Earths we would need to sustain your habits.

**My maternal grandparents were always on the ramparts** politically and socially, so for me, activism was the air I breathed. In high school, Thoreau was a big influence; in college, I made a film about the dangers of nuclear power which radically changed me.

As a young mother, the dioxin in diapers—the notion that babies' little bottoms were in contact with a known carcinogen—propelled my husband and me to switch to cloth diapers, which we washed at home. When my oldest daughter was in nursery school, I volunteered as the "Shabbat Mom"—it involved helping with lunch—and I watched these kids throw everything in the garbage. At the same time, I was a volunteer at a soup kitchen in Trenton, and I saw kids there who routinely went to bed hungry. It was all so disturbing.

In 1993, the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL) was getting off the ground, and I became very active, speaking at synagogues about the connection between Judaism and the environment, about stewardship and the need to live "sustainably." I worked with an interfaith group in New Jersey called GreenFaith whose mission it was to get churches and synagogues to switch to renewable energies: solar, wind, hydroelectric. I wrote a lot, on topics like toxic lawn spray—suburbanites have an insane fear of dandelions. I created environmental curricula; I was more or less on a rampage. In 2001, COEJL sent me and seven other Jewish environmental educators (plus rabbis) to the remote Tongass National Park in Alaska. It was a silent retreat—except for Shabbat, when we *davvened*, sang and had discussions. For 10 days, we sea-kayaked, ate organically, saw the effects of clear-cut forests. The experience was life-changing.

From 2004 until recently I worked at COEJL, first as its Communications Director and then as Executive Director. I originated a Chanukah campaign called "How Many Jews Does It Take to Change a Light Bulb?" We delivered compact fluorescent bulbs (CFL's)—which are energy-efficient, affordable, and can be bought just about anywhere by now—to synagogues and Jewish institutions, for their own use and for congregants' home use. We distributed 50,000 bulbs—that prevents 18,000 tons of carbon dioxide from going into the atmosphere. Across the US, we had Jews changing their light bulbs for Chanukah. Some synagogues have put in solar *nerot tamid* [eternal lights].

We also brought the Al Gore film, "An Inconvenient Truth," to synagogues. Why? Because people need to understand that the imperiled environment is a Jewish issue—it's a spiritual issue, it's a religious issue. Judaism's new social justice cause is the environment.

—*as told to Susan Schnur.*

*And don't miss* **BLOGMEISTER:** Leah Koenig, 25

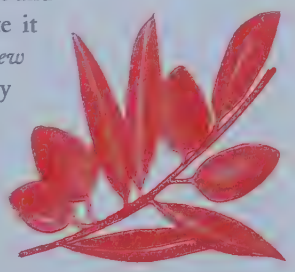
*Editor of* "The Jew and the Carrot" *(www.jcarrot.org), the "front page and voice of the emerging Jewish food movement," a project of Hazon (www.hazon.org).*

**Cyberspace Jews really want to eat less passively,** to know where their food comes from, how healthy it is, whether their consumption is ethical, what Judaism has to say about genetically modified food. We see Judaism as having a very rich history of eating communally—Jews eat! And we deeply understand how eating together creates community. Unlike our grandmothers, many of us work full-time and have a broader definition of "family"—we don't generally live near our biological ones, we truly celebrate "difference," and we have non-Jews around our dinner tables.

Recently we've been cyber-debating about whether to *shecht* [to kill in accordance with kashrut] a goat at Hazon's upcoming annual food conference. Vegetarians are against it, but meat-eaters are divided. Some want to be in touch with taking a life, some fear being *that* in touch, some wonder whether such an experience will turn them into vegetarians.

We love making Shabbat dinner—the smell of challah wafting through the house, the surprise of what's in a weekly haul of CSA vegetables. Bok choy? Turnips? We find the improvisatory aspect of cooking from whatever the Earth serves up that week very exciting. Personally, my cookbook "bibles" are Madhur Jaffrey's *World Vegetarian* and Deborah Madison's *Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone.* What runs through my veins? Kale. Sauté it with garlic, soy sauce and ginger. Put it in a frittata. Grate it (raw and fine) into salads. The *Jew and the Carrot's* cyber community wants the larger Jewish world to eat together more—especially on Shabbat—and to eat increasingly "sustainably."

*—as told to Susan Schnur.*



*Illustrations by Sharon Binder www.sharonartwork.com.*

# DEAR READER

## *We Now Extend the Invitation to You!*

Whom would *you* like to bring into Lilith's sukkah?
Who has been a significant eco-role-model for *you*?
What shakes *your* lulav?
The Earth is a fragile sukkah—what one act of repair can *you* offer?

In thinking about Eco-Ushpizin,
three Jewish ethical principles are useful to know:

*Bal Tashchit:* Do Not Waste Nature's Resources.
*Tzaar Baalei Chayyim:* Refrain from Hurting Animals.
*Shmirat HaGuf:* Treat Your Body—and the Earth's—as Sacred.

***May we dwell in balance in the coming year.***
***May we give thanks for all that we have reaped.***
***May we sustain the Earth as She sustains us:***
***With abundance.***
***Amen.***

# DIVIDED LOYALTY

## *How reading Hermann Hesse betrayed my father*

*by* SHULAMIT FALIK

It is 1969, year of the Woodstock summer music festival, year that I celebrate my 17th birthday. Not that birthdays merit much attention in my family, where the calendar is already overpopulated with more important events—religious feasts and fast days, weddings, bar mitzvahs, and ritual circumcisions. Nonetheless, I celebrate my own coming-of-age in a year when the world is being reinvented by other 17-year-olds. Especially those lucky enough to be skinny-dipping in the lakes of New York's Catskill Mountains, rolling in rain-soaked earth, and tripping their brains out to the rhythms of rock-and-roll.

I can't be at Woodstock, because the community I was born into puts up walls to shelter its young and keep us untouched by the corrupting events of the Sixties. Trapped in the confines of Crown Heights, Brooklyn, I watch as my peers embrace a psychedelic uniform of tie-dyed t-shirts, love beads, army jackets, bell-bottom jeans and peace signs. I covet the excitement captured in television images of these colorful flower children letting it all hang out; giving anti-riot police the finger as they're being tear-gassed and dragged off in handcuffs; demonstrating for peace while shouting "Make love, not war!" at the "Establishment."

"Our kind of people" don't wear ripped jeans and love beads, or expose bare arms and legs in public. Instead, we girls dress modestly—long-sleeved blouses, high-necked shirts, skirts below the knees—so as not to draw attention to our budding bodies. We speak modestly—no curses or angry rhetoric. We especially don't speak out against a government that offers us religious freedom and a haven from persecution. In fact, we don't rebel against any authority—teachers, rabbis, or parents.

I don't rebel, either, not at age 17. I know that this community, preaching kindness and compassion, practices kindness to its members. But I also know how non-conformists are treated—spit out from its bosom and punished with guilt and abandonment.

My three sisters and one brother—all married with children—like living in Crown Heights. To them, it feels safe, comfortable, and right. But I see myself as secretly tapped by the Zeitgeist. I envision a mythical bird riding the air currents, scattering seeds of freedom like fairy dust in the souls of the young. I belong to a youth culture of one, full of my own pent-up love, rage, and anti-authoritarianism. And I hold out in secret rebellion against my own personal authority figure, my father, in our dingy second-floor apartment, where the lights are always dim and the fraying upholstery is held together with masking tape. "Vee don't support Con Edison," is my father's mantra.

My father relishes the role of patriarch. Enforcing the rules of Judaism, transplanting them from his East European soil to the new world, ensuring continuity of the tribe—this is what gives his life meaning. He adds his own restrictions to the mix and inflicts them with the same fervor: the prohibitions against wasting electricity, buying new clothes, throwing away stale bread. And he's especially zealous about the fourth commandment, "Honor they father and mother," which is taken very seriously in our community. Like all other commandments, the medieval rabbinic scholars broke it down into bite-seized rules: You don't talk back to your father. You don't contradict him in public, even if he's wrong. You don't sit in his seat, even if there are no other chairs at the table.

My father tells us that he would rather be feared than loved. After all, we're not commanded to love our parents, but only to honor them. It's easy to fear him, since he's bigger, stronger, and louder than everyone in the family. Everything about him is oversized: his aquiline nose, deep-set hazel eyes, his broad forehead that extends way back to a narrow swath of white hair that reaches across the back of his head from ear to ear.

When his sentence structure mimics his native Yiddish, and he interchanges his V's and W's, when you see him eating from his dinner plate with bare, large hands, when he insists that you

chew a piece of thread if he's sewing a garment you're wearing "so your brains don't get sewn up"—you see into the primitive roots of his life.

He lectures me about this life repeatedly, believing that it yields deep lessons. Growing up fatherless on a subsistence farm in Romania, milking the goat while his mother slaughters the chicken. Leaving *heder* (religious school) at age 10 to become the family breadwinner when the envelopes from his father in America stop arriving. Surviving on bread and water during the long train rides to Odessa, Russia, carrying small goods for trade across the border. Trudging across the Carpathian Mountains during World War I with his mother and invalid sister, en route to the Czechoslovakian refugee camp that housed them for two years. Coming to America with five cents in his pocket. Learning English in night school. Quitting his first job in a knitting factory because they wanted him to work on *Shabbes*. And so on.

"Adversity makes you strong!" he shouts, pounding his chest. "You kids are soft and lazy." Rather than bemoan his lack of formal education, he pokes fun of people with college degrees—"educated fools" he contemptuously calls college professors, psychologists, and other professionals.

"Vomen are veak," he says, meaning that we are emotional, we cry easily, our feelings get hurt when he criticizes us. "A voman's place is in the home," he snorts, when I come home with A's in high school. "Vhat use vill be arithmetic and geography for you vhen you're standing behind a sink, vashing dishes?"

Eventually, I learn to tune out his voice. And I learn not to provoke him. I see his anger coming when the veins stand out on his neck and that taut force starts to move through his body, when he looks like his wrath could be ignited with one disobedient word. All of us—my mother, my sisters, my brother and I—learn to tiptoe around him, trying to keep him at bay.

**I'M GOOD AT HIDING. BUT ONE DAY I GET CAUGHT: NOT WITH ILLICIT DRUGS, NOT WITH A SEXUAL PARTNER— WITH A BOOK.**

But with his young grandchildren, my nieces and nephews, honey drips from his mouth. "Little *pitchurik'ls*!" he beams, taking the smallest in his arms and dancing an impromptu waltz while singing a tuneless "bidee bom." He delights in teaching them an acronym he's developed: The *alef-beys* (Hebrew alphabet) backwards. "TaSHRiK, TsaPiS, NiMLaCH, YUDCHiZ, VaH, DaG, BA!" They repeat after him, jumping on him, shrieking with laughter.

"*Zeydi*, you're so cute!" they giggle. My eyes narrow to slits as I watch them pinch the wrinkled cheeks and pat the shiny head of my demon father. I am enraged that they can so easily escape my fate. Years later, I will understand that my father had demons of his own to wrestle with. At 17, however, I am still a defenseless adolescent, and he is the loudest voice in my house and my head.

So I rebel in small ways, away from his watchful eye. When I leave the house, I roll my skirts above my knee in defiance of the *tsniyus* (modesty) rules. I flirt with the yeshiva boys at the kosher pizza shop, modestly, trying to attract their attention without making direct eye contact (too brazen). At home, I rebel in my mind, through uncensored fantasies, and through reading. Cloistered as I am in Crown Heights, I still have access to the wide-open spaces of world literature at the Brooklyn Public Library. Books are my portals out of this narrow world, but I'm careful to keep the more subversive of them hidden. I even hide my thoughts, becoming quiet, inscrutable.

I'm good at hiding. My parents are old, busy with their other children and grandchildren, and I slip through the cracks of their attention easily. But one day in 1969, I get caught: not with illicit drugs, not with a sexual partner—with a book.

On that wintry Sunday afternoon, I am home alone, reading my newest book, *Demian*, a coming-of-age story by the German author and Nobel laureate Hermann Hesse, cocooned in my bedroom. Though the book was published in 1924, Hesse has recently become a cult favorite with my generation, and my personal spiritual hero.

It is the most iconoclastic book I have ever read, turning all my values upside down with its uncompromising individualism, its radical interpretation of biblical stories, and its strange new gods. *Demian* is the semi-autobiographical account of Hesse's own escape from a repressive religious upbringing.

His protagonist, Emil Sinclair, grows up like me in a strictly religious household. As a child, Sinclair is struck with the distinction between the "two realms": his parents' world of light, order, and piety, and the "outside world"—dark, evil, mysterious and seductive. Seeking his destiny, he ultimately finds spiritual mentors who introduce him to an ancient and mysterious non-Christian god named Abraxas, a deity who includes in his being both God and the Devil. *Demian* frightens me, but it also calls to me, and I have begun to carry it wherever I go, a badge of my emerging identity.

I visualize Hesse as an elegant, elderly gentleman, strolling through his country estate in Montagnola, Switzerland. He wears a straw hat and round steel-rimmed glasses, and he carries his favorite authors with him: Neitzsche, Schopenhauer, Spinoza. He stops and sits on a stone bench, and serenely reads from his own writings: *"I have been and still am a seeker, but I have ceased to question stars and books; I have begun to listen to the teachings my blood whispers to me."* I hear Hesse's crisp German accent in my head; chills run up my spine. Suddenly, I hear the front door open unexpectedly. I go to the kitchen, caught off-guard, *Demian* in hand.

My father is in the kitchen, still wearing his old winter coat, worn through in several places. For some reason, he has come home early from his discount jewelry store on the Lower East Side, where he works six days a week, Sunday through Friday. He can afford better than this coat, but his childhood of dire poverty, coupled with religious injunctions against vanity, have left him opposed to spending money on appearances.

He removes his black felt hat, revealing a sprinkling of moles and age spots, and he covers his bald head quickly with

a faded black *yarmulke*. I greet him with the obligatory kiss on the cheek, a sign of respect. His face feels raw and cold to my warm touch. I'm about to go back to my room—we don't have much to say to each other these days—when something about the book cover attracts his attention.

"*Vos iz dos*?" (What is this?) he asks, reverting to Yiddish.

"It's nothing," I mumble, knowing that Hesse's philosophy is *treyf* (non-kosher), running counter to everything that Judaism teaches.

"What nothing? It looks like something to me."

"It's just a book. A book I'm reading." I'm nervous, but not too worried, because what would my father—with his third-grade education—know of Hermann Hesse?

"For school?" he asks. Without waiting for an answer, he seizes the book from my hand.

He looks at it through his thick, black-rimmed glasses. "Hermann Hesse?" He spits the words out, contempt dripping from each syllable.

I think back to the Hesse of my fantasy, so civilized and worldly, imparting words of wisdom in his gentle manner. So different from my father, in his old coat, purple with rage, his voice harsh and loud. But Hesse is just a fantasy. My father is real.

The veins on his neck are blue, raised. I step back, afraid that he's going to slap me, but his rage is directed at *Demian*, not at me. He rips the offending cover off the book, shreds the pages, and throws the remains on the floor. "So this is for vat I raised you, to bring Hermann Hesse into my household? I'll break every bone in your body if I ever catch Herr Hesse again in my house," he roars.

*Crazy old man,* I say to myself. *This is what he does. Destroys everything that is precious to me, scoffs at it, tramples it underfoot.* I want to cry, but I will not—will not give him another reason to say that women are weak. Instead, I answer with my silence. It is rebellious, not compliant.

My father doesn't know the difference. He is satisfied. "Make sure you set the table before dinner," he says, and goes to the living room to *daven minchah*.

I pick up the tattered remains of *Demian*. My book is destroyed, I think, but I will not be defeated. I may appear mute, but the words are seething inside of me, and I swear to myself that one day, I will let this story—my story—out of my head and into the world. I will give it a life of its own. The way my father did, transmitting his life story to his children. The way Hermann Hesse did with *Demian*.

It is 25 years after Woodstock—1994—and I visit my father in the old second-floor apartment in Brooklyn. At 93, his eyesight and hearing failing, he is no longer the powerful patriarch of my youth; at 42, I am no longer an angry adolescent. Though he can still enrage me like no one else, he's been steadily mellowing, especially during the past year when he became a widower.

"I have to be father and mother to you now," he says to my siblings and me. Even though we are in our forties and fifties, he frets over us as if we were schoolchildren, reminding us to put on warm hats and scarves in the winter. "Bevare those drafts," he says sagely, wagging a finger at us.

He leads me to the sofa. "Come sit by me, *kindenyu*," he says, patting the seat to his left, "next to my good ear." He starts a monologue about his life in the old country; today he tells me about how it was when his mother took him from their little *shtetl* in Romania to the big city of Tzernowicz to live with his uncle and be apprenticed to a jeweler. It was 1918; he was 15. It is a period in his life I'd never heard of.

"I vas a country boy, from a farm. I didn't fit in vith the people in the big city, but my mother wanted me there, to learn a trade. Hah! You ver an apprentice, you worked till your fingers

**I AM ENRAGED THAT MY NIECES AND NEPHEWS CAN SO EASILY ESCAPE MY FATE.**

were blue vith cold, then they gave you a piece of brown bread, a bowl of *mamalige*, and a hard bed to sleep on.

"In our willage, the people ver simple, pious and honest. In the city, people ver more corrupt. Too sophisticated for religion! Some of the Jews in Tzernowicz even vent to the university, spoke German instead of Yiddish, and read literature. They wanted to be like their neighbors. The same neighbors who turned on them and slaughtered them vhen the Nazis came!

"Friday night, instead of going to *shul*, or to the rebbe's *tish* (table), they sat in the salon, talking about Nietzsche (poo!), Spinoza (poo!), Schopenhauer (poo!), Hesse (poo!)." He spits after each of these names for emphasis. "'*Got is geshtorbn*' (God is dead), I heard them say. Can you understand such a thing? For Jews? Because of this, Hitler came into the vorld, because Jews forgot our God, our Torah, our heart."

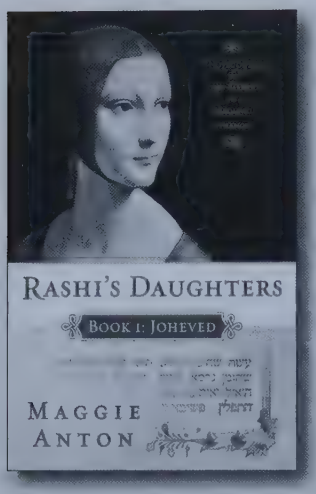
My father has been gone for 10 years now. His voice lives on only in my head, where it coexists peacefully with Hermann Hesse's voice. My existential angst weighs less heavily on me these days; Hesse's message of individualism and my father's dogma of loyalty to tribe and faith are no longer at war with each other, polarizing my inner existence as they did in my adolescence. I have no more need for demon fathers or spiritual heroes—I am writing my own story.

It is 2007, my son Zach is 12 years old, enrolled in a wonderful public school, absorbing all the knowledge I yearned for as a child. I, in turn, teach him everything I've learned and hold sacred: the universe elucidated by science and myth; poems hidden in trees and stars; tales of wounded child-warriors and the healers who mend them.

Closest to my heart, I teach him about the crowned letters of an ancient alphabet that dance and sing on scrolls of parchment, forming in prose and verse the stories and teachings of my ancestors—teachings that my blood will always whisper. ■

***Shulamit Falik*** *is a freelance writer living in Syosset, New York.*

Life, Love and the Talmud in Medieval France

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# FIRST ROSH HASHANAH

*by* BARBARA WHITE

The words told me nothing
I could understand.
The melody tugged

into paths I could lose
my way on. I fingered
the deep blue

of my father's jacket.
High on a stage a man
stood alone, floated

his song, lush and green,
into the slow
evening air.

His singing turned
to sobbing. I swiveled
from my mother's face

to my father's, watched
my aunt, uncle, cousins.
The cry shattered

above us. No one moved,
no one cared. They'd never
help him cry.

# THE FAST

*by* SARAH ANTINE

Hunger makes me an old woman.
It is so much work
standing, sitting.

This prayer book is too heavy.
I don't look up from it. The joints
palsy, they are becoming spirit.

My sins belong to the plural, to the all.

We have acted brazenly, deceitfully.

We have shrugged off conscience,
tormented our own hearts.

The weight of we—

I didn't have to hold anything heavier.

Tonight,
I will eat; the sun can't last much longer,
as if today is an invisible house

that only exists on a street
one day of the year.
Its windows cleaned and raised—

scarlet curtains turn white as litmus;
The sun rolls out of sight.


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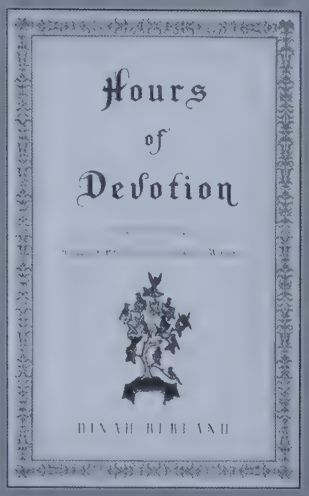


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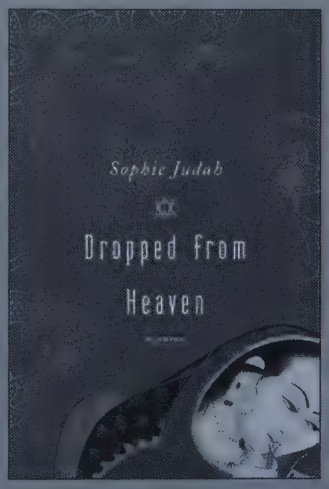


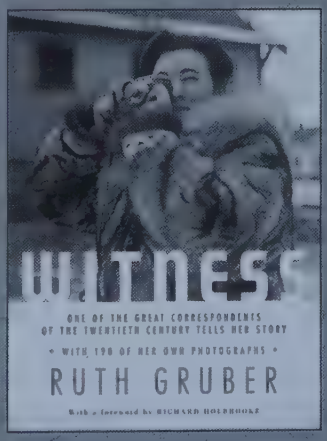
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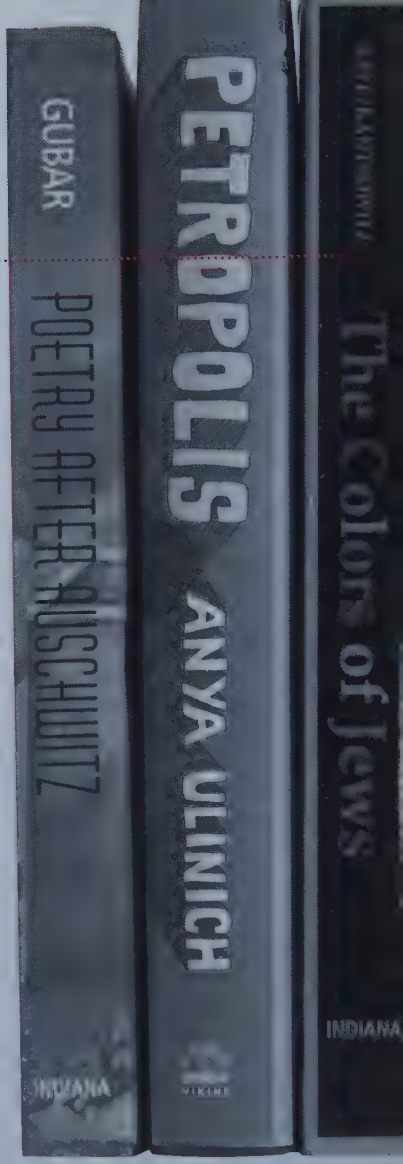



## Jews in Zoos

*A true story about cages and survival.*

In *The Zookeeper's Wife* (W.W. Norton, $23.95), **Diane Ackerman** reveals the savage world created by Nazi Germany—a world that promoted conservation and animal rights while justifying the murder of 11 million people. Under the Third Reich's pseudoscientific ideology, purebred animals were exalted as "noble, mythic, almost angelic." Those humans deemed genetically impure, however—primarily Jews, Gypsies, Slavs, Catholics—were stripped of all value and sentenced to death. It is against this unnervingly paradoxical backdrop that Ackerman sets the true story of Jan and Antonina Zabinski.

Before the war, the Zabinskis were zookeepers in Warsaw. They lived according to the shifting seasons and the zoo's own cacophonous but predictable rhythm. Everything changed after Germany's invasion of Poland, when their insulated world was exposed to the dangers of occupation. Their zoo was devastated by Germany's bombs, and many of their Jewish friends were forced to relocate to the ghetto. Outraged by the Third Reich's brutality, the Zabinskis (who were active members of the Polish Resistance) began risking their lives to smuggle Jews to safety. They capitalized on the leverage granted to them as zookeepers—zoos dovetailed with the Third Reich's obsession with exotic animals—hiding transient Jews in spare rooms, sheds, and even deserted animal cages.

With her husband gone most days on subversive missions, the great responsibility of deflecting attention from the zoo and maintaining a sense of comfort for her guests fell to Antonina Zabinski. Ackerman describes her as deeply compassionate with a "precise and very special gift of observing and understanding animals." As the war raged, Antonia's world crumbled around her. Still, through her gift of intuition, coupled with fierce determination, she managed to nurture her unusual family. "I have to admit that the atmosphere in our house was quite pleasant," Antonia confessed in her diary, "sometimes even almost happy."

Ackerman is known for her nature writing, particularly *A Natural History of the Senses* and *An Alchemy of Mind*; she culled much of her research for *The Zookeeper's Wife* from the copious diaries kept by Antonina Zabinski, who shared Ackerman's ability for melding the lyrical and scientific. Through the diary excerpts, readers grasp the personal, but universal emotional arc of a war-ravaged life.

Ultimately, the triumph of *The Zookeeper's Wife* is that Ackerman reveals a freshly powerful story of the Holocaust. The Zabinskis sit with Oskar Schindler and other compassionate Gentiles heralded for putting justice before their own security. But Antonina's situation is set apart by her living amongst creatures as exotic as the squealing gibbon and familiar as her own child. Her connection with and unconditional respect for the natural world set her in stark opposition to the Nazi's ardent, but limited love for purebreds. Antonina Zabinski lived the idea of what it means to love one's fellow beings—not for narcissism or gain, but for the inherent gifts they bring to the world.

—LEAH KOENIG

## Black Russian

*Unlikely heroine Sasha Goldberg goes from Siberia to self-sufficiency.*

**Anya Ulinich's** debut novel, *Petropolis* (Viking, $24.95) takes its title from an Osip Mandelstam poem mourning the fall of Petrograd: "O, if you are a star, *Petropolis*, your city... is dying." Sasha Goldberg, an awkward teenager with two major strikes against her in pre-Perestroika Russian society—she is both black and Jewish—struggles to survive her own dying city. Raised in Asbestos 2, a bleak Siberian mining town, Goldberg spends her childhood under the disappointed gaze of her mother, Lubov, a striking and intelligent woman with no outlet for her ambition. Ulinich's descriptions of Asbestos 2 are tragically beautiful:

"On clear nights," she writes, describing the network of footprints that freeze over each evening, "silver threads connected the school to the liquor store, the liquor store to the asbestos pit, the pit to the morgue, and the morgue to the Conversation Point [a long-distance calling station], drawing a predictable diagram of daily life in a place unsuitable for living."

Lubov's attempts at culture land Sasha in an after-school art program. Though classes are held in the half-submerged basement of an abandoned building, to Sasha they represent paradise. For the first time, she is accepted by her peers. Quickly, however, that acceptance leads to her first love affair, and a pregnancy. The complications that follow force Sasha to flee, moving from one identity to another: a 16 year-old mail-order bride in Arizona; an unpaid domestic and yeshiva protégé to wealthy Jewish Suburban Chicagoans; and finally a self-sufficient New Yorker, savvy enough to charge $25 an hour for Feng-shui cleaning.

But *Petropolis* is not your typical immigrant-makes-good tale. Sasha is haunted by what she has abandoned in Asbestos 2—a disappointed mother, an unknown daughter, and a forgotten city that threatens to bury them both. Even as she matures, no longer a frizzy and awkward girl but instead a strong woman confident enough to hunt down her errant father in Brooklyn, where he'd defected to when she was a child—and then to ignore him in favor of his young and vibrant wife—Sasha affects a "mental twilight" which allows her to function without constantly aching.

Jake Tarakan, the physically-disabled son of Sasha's Chicago would-be benefactors, is the only American to whom Sasha fully relates. One of the few wheelchair-bound characters in American fiction, Jake is intelligent and attuned to Sasha's plight, but both he and Sasha, scarred from years of playing the misfit, are initially unable to trust one another. ("Meet me," Sasha quips at one point, invoking the Russian term for a black woman: "Sasha Goldberg, a real-life Russian *negritianka*.")

In Sasha and Jake, Ulinich, who immigrated to the US from Moscow at the age of 17, has written a believable and beautiful relationship. The same might be said for the far less beautiful, but sadly as believable, marriage of Sasha's mother and father. Other characters feel less true, and at times the writing feels heavy-handed; some leaps of faith are required as Sasha moves across Russia and then America. Nonetheless, *Petropolis* is an impressive debut, a page-turner capable of describing not just the dark loneliness of a remote Siberian city but also of its struggling women.

—ILANA STANGER

**"Silver threads connected the school to the liquor store, the liquor store to the asbestos pit, the pit to the morgue...drawing a predictable diagram of daily life."**

## Art After Atrocity

*A noted feminist theorist on the power and impotence of Holocaust art.*

*Poetry After Auschwitz: Remembering What One Never Knew* (Indiana University Press, $24.95) is something of a departure for **Susan Gubar**, best known as a pioneering feminist critic whose notable works include *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the 19th-Century Literary Imagination* (co-written with Sandra M. Gilbert, 1979). In her remarkable new study, Gubar reveals the aesthetic and ethical implications of creating literature "at some remove from the calamity."

Focusing primarily on English-language poetry but also considering the visual arts and photography, Gubar explores how language is simultaneously powerful and impotent in addressing the most unspeakable events. In this way, she engages head-on with philosopher Theodor Adorno's oft-quoted warning about the barbarism of writing poetry (or, in effect, creating anything) after the Shoah. The result is a gripping, densely woven book that also speaks to significant debates in contemporary Holocaust Studies.

Gubar surveys works by both women and men, recognizing different types of gendered responses but refusing to value one expression over another. No betrayal of her feminist scholarship, *Poetry After Auschwitz* exhibits a subtle and effective deployment of the strategies of gender studies to explore how authors of all types confront the horror of the Holocaust. Thus in the chapter "Suckled by Panic," Gubar focuses on the figure of parent and child, reading works by Irena Klepfisz, Cynthia Ozick, Jorie Graham, and Marilyn Hacker as commentaries on the loss of both mother and *mame-loshn* (mother tongue). In her lyrical closing chapter, "Poetry and Survival," Gubar uses Anne Michaels' 1998 novel *Fugitive Pieces* to consider more general questions about how gender dynamics operate in post-Shoah creative activity. She shows how "empathic imagination" enables a contemporary Canadian woman writer like Michaels to populate her novel with male subjects whose suffering she herself has never known.

As she attempts to circumscribe a necessarily difficult field, Gubar identifies the poetics of Holocaust verse with an arsenal of formal terms. Chief among these is "proxy-witnessing," the act of speaking in the place of one who is unable to testify for herself. A related concept is "anamnesis," recalling what others knew. This is an apt term for poets who turn to archival material and create documentary verse in the model of Charles Reznikoff's 1975 *Holocaust*, which stitches quotations from official government records of Nazi trials

into poems that let the readers serve as the jury. To describe contemporary poetry's engagement with Holocaust images—a crucial aspect of commemoration—Gubar utilizes "ecphrasis," or the verbal description of visual art. This technique applies to the ways in which poets Kirtland Snyder and Jason Sommer engage with the photographs in Roman Vishniac's *A Vanished World*. These various terms bring English-language Holocaust poetry into dialogue with classical poetic genres while also displaying the drastic divergences of Holocaust verse. Gubar thus supplies a working vocabulary for poems whose complex negotiations of consciousness, memory, and voice often defy easy categorization or immediate comprehension.

A notable internality haunts Gubar's analysis. In the chapter "Masters of Disaster," Gubar reveals the family history that has in large part propelled her foray into this project. Her personal motivation to understand the aftershocks of trauma and question the notion of survival both informs and enriches her scholarly investigation of what it means to create (and consume) poetry after the catastrophe. Through the many "empathic imaginative acts" vigorously examined in this book, some kind of poetic justice is achieved: "Without alleviating either grief or guilt, poets of the Holocaust can teach us how to inhabit, at least momentarily, events in history that we can neither escape nor transcend." In other words, to cite Gubar's quotation of the late writer and scholar Terrence Des Pres: "We cannot *not* imagine."

— HANNAH PRESSMAN

## She Has Seen It All

*The career of a 95-year-old ex-war-correspondent.*

In his introduction to **Ruth Gruber's** *Witness: One of the Great Correspondents of the Twentieth Century Tells her Story* (Schocken Books, $27.50), former U.S. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke describes Gruber's life as rich and fulfilling. "Ruth became the chronicler of every major Jewish emigration to Israel—from North Africa, Yemen, Iraq, Romania, Russia and Ukraine, and finally from Ethiopia, where, in her mid-seventies, she scrambled up and down muddy fields to find Jews living in dangerous and terrible conditions in the highlands. Ruth," he continues, has lived "a life that has made a difference." The 95-year-old New York-based photographer and journalist would heartily agree.

This, Gruber's nineteenth book, highlights nine examples of her first-person, on-site reporting on events as varied as the Soviet Arctic in 1935 and the mass departure of 120,000 Iraqi Jews in 1951—accompanied by nearly 200 photos. One of the most heartening chapters takes us back to 1944, when then-President Franklin Roosevelt decided to allow 1000 Jewish refugees to flee Italy for the U.S. At the time, European Jews were barred from entering America, and FDR's dictum came as a result of sustained pressure from the War Refugee Board he had established. Gruber was then working for Henry Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, and was sent to Italy to assist the terrified group. Her description of 13 days aboard a ship, interviewing refugees—shoeless and shirtless men and ragged women and children—is harrowing. "From them, I learned that no person believes in his or her own death," she writes. "I realized that from this moment on, my life would be inextricably bound with rescue and survival."

One of Gruber's most famous pieces of reporting was aboard the American ship Exodus, in 1947; she described vividly the plight of 4500 Holocaust survivors who tried to enter the Holy Land only to be attacked by British warships. Instead of allowing them to enter Israel, English soldiers diverted them to a camp in Cyprus. "It was a hot hellhole of desert sand and wind, of tents and Quonset huts," Gruber writes. "The architecture had come straight out of Auschwitz."

Throughout her chronicles, Gruber appears fearless, the personification of chutzpah. "I packed what I could in a duffel bag, slung my camera bag over my shoulder, and carrying my little Hermes typewriter in my hand, took off from Moscow," she writes of her first reporting assignment. Despite a phenomenal sense of adventure, herein lies the book's flaw. Since little biographical data is included, the reader is left to wonder about the source of her strength. How did her parents react to their unmarried daughter traipsing the world with only a camera, a notebook, and unabashed curiosity? And since her career began in the midst of the Great Depression, how did she become the Special Foreign Correspondent at the New York Herald Tribune? Answers would have helped Gruber's powerful, humane persona seem less enigmatic, though no less admirable.

**"It was a hot hellhole of desert sand and wind, tents and Quonset huts. The architecture was straight out of Auschwitz."**

— ELEANOR J. BADER

## Save the Planet

*A behind-the-politics look at justice on a global scale.*

For most of us, *tikkun olam*, repairing the world, is only a small part of our busy, complicated lives. Not so for **Marisa Handler.** Her memoir, *Loyal to the Sky—Notes from an Activist* (Berrett-Koehler, $24.95), is a lively and revealing behind-the-scenes look at the global justice movement and Handler's personal journey toward living a compassionate life.

Handler was born in apartheid South Africa, where she lived until age 11, in

## Our Jewish Feminist Gumshoe: The Author Behind V. I. Warshawski

**Sara Paretsky,** author of 14 mysteries featuring V.I. Warshawski, is credited for transforming the genre of hard-boiled detective fiction with her feminist heroine. In her fiction, Paretsky has tackled such topics as Holocaust reparations payments, domestic violence, turmoil in the lives of blue-collar Chicagoans, the government's abuse of power. "The questions of who gets to speak, and who listens, are central to how I view the world," she writes. She tells why in her powerful and moving memoir, *Writing in an Age of Silence* (Verso Books).

*I grew up in a tangled nest of outsideness. As the only girl in my family, I was constrained from the age of nine to give up my own childhood in becoming the caretaker of my young brothers. My family was one of the few Jewish families in the town of Lawrence [Kansas]—our arrival brought the number of Jewish men to ten so that the community could start holding services. We were like giraffes, an oddity that invited staring. I knew that if I revealed any of the ugliness of our home life to the larger world, and it was ugly in ways that are still hard for me to think about, I would be bringing shame to the Jews, who were beleaguered enough without my adding to their woes. The shadow of the Holocaust, in which my European family was obliterated down to the last infant cousin, lay heavy over my childhood: one did not make one's private woes a mocking point for gleeful Gentiles.*

*When my father gave my dolls and stuffed animals to my young brother, telling me that at nine I was too old for toys, my mother told me not to cry, because there were children in Harlem and Johannesburg, or dead children in the Vilna ghetto, who'd never even had toys.*

*My needs and desires were insignificant in the grand scheme of neediness—it was my job to serve, to help undo bonds of wickedness, share my bread with the hungry, and in general, let the oppressed go free. My life wasn't supposed to hold pleasure: my parents forbade art or music classes, any after-school groups, or outings with friends. Once, when I took part in a school play, my parents condemned my selfishness in language so scalding that they effectively kept me from any other leisure activities. Even today, if I sit in my attic writing my novels, I feel guilty for not being out on the streets, immolating myself on the altar of social neediness. I should be tutoring, working for abortion rights, saving Darfur, undoing the Patriot Act—in short, saying yes to every appeal that crosses my desk. Only a selfish person would stay in her attic spinning stories.*

*I was a person raised to serve, who came of age in a time of passion for justice. My character dovetailed neatly with the times. My own sense of voicelessness also let me to see and feel the anguish of the powerless.*

1988, when her progressive parents decided the brutal, repressive system would never end peacefully and left for America. She has since lived, traveled, organized and protested in Israel, Nepal, Peru, Ecuador and in many locations around the U.S. From saying "no" to apartheid in a South African schoolyard to saying "no" to oil companies in the Amazon Basin, to war in Iraq, to free trade and Republican policies, Handler puts a face—many faces—on the global justice movement.

Code Orange (of which she is a member), Code Pink, Food Not Bombs, Veterans for Peace, the Puppetistas, SOA Watch, the anarchists... they and more are all here, but looking very different from the media portrayals. For example, Handler describes militarized response to mostly peaceful demonstrations as "domestic repression." Committed to tactics of nonviolence, she acknowledges that "nonviolent civil disobedience is apparently as terrifying as ever to the armed-and-uniformed guardians of liberty and democracy." The book's last chapter is a moving and sometimes frightening recounting of the cost that can be extracted for standing up against those purported guardians.

Throughout the book, Handler struggles with alienation, as she sees the need not only for connections between people and governments, and between ideas and actions, but also between activism and spirituality. It is not surprising, then, that in her own personal spiritual journey, she is drawn to Buddhism, which supports her dedication to nonviolent change. She declares the time spent on her first Buddhist retreat in India to be "ten days that change my life...I glimpse what I can only call my fundamental goodness. Except it isn't mine. It belongs, as I had suspected, to all of us. Indeed it is bigger than all of us." Buddhism increasingly informs her opinions and actions even as she continues to feel connected to the cultural and historic Judaism of her birth.

It is not often that someone who has barely finished living the first three decades of her life has the "stuff" of a personal memoir, and Handler can sometimes sound overwritten, self-conscious and even a bit preachy. But her voice is authentic and well-intentioned. At its best, Handler's story confronts us with the challenge and power of personal moral choice and the possibilities for many individuals together to change the world. "I have come to believe that every one of us is an activist," she writes, "and...every action that brings us closer to ourselves, to each other, to the planet—births a better world."

– SUSAN BAROCAS

## What a Jew Looks Like

*Two books present a new cartography of Jewish identity.*

There is much talk these days about the loss of Jewish identity or the re-imagining

thereof. Two new books—**Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz's** *The Colors of Jews* (Indiana University Press, $24.95) and *New Jews: The End of the Jewish Diaspora* by **Carolyn Aviv** and **David Schneer** (NYU Press, $20) both lean towards optimism and possibility in their examinations of how today's Jewish experiences fit into a global and historical view of Jewish life.

*The Colors of Jews* declares its project from the start—the title is a clever play on the now-ubiquitous phrase "Jews of Color." Such a phrase, used without a greater consciousness, Kaye/Kantrowitz intimates, is analogous to saying "a woman doctor"—in qualifying the subject "Jews" with the phrase "of color," we make assumptions about what is "normal." Instead, Kaye/Kantrowitz asserts that "The numbers of Jews of color is large enough that Jewish whiteness should never be assumed." Moreover, the slope of race is slippery and subjective, shifting with changing circumstance and reflected through various prisms. As such, the testimonies of Jews of all colors are no ploy of political correctness; they represent a numerical reality, one that may be at odds with many American Ashkenazi Jews' experiences.

Kaye/Kantrowitz explores the ways in which non-Ashkenazi Jews are exoticized and considered, somehow, inauthentic. She interviews some of the biggest names in the field Jewish multiculturalism, including Yavilah McCoy, who runs Ayecha: Jewish Diversity Resources, and Rabbi Angela Warnick Buchdahl, both of whom are well-known for their Jewish diversity-centered activism. If the book lacks in any way, it is structural coherence—a chapter in the middle detailing the history of the organization Jews For Racial and Economic Justice, while informative, comes out of nowhere, and a reader who chooses to return to it at the end may find it of more use.

*In New Jews*, Carolyn Aviv and David Schneer (who previously collaborated on *Queer Jews*) are also interested in the deconstruction of a Jewish binary. In advocating that the Diaspora-Homeland dichotomy is no longer relevant, they invoke the Global Jew, a concept reminiscent of how the identities of other diasporic communities have evolved. A Global Jew exists in neither exile nor true home, because "home is constantly shifting." The authors of this volume don't ignore the relevance of Israel to a Jewish identity, but they disputes its centrality—how, they ask, can Israel occupy a central place in Jewish life when there are Israelis who don't identify as Jews, as well as Israelis who leave Israel to live in the "Diaspora"? Examining locations as diverse as New York, San Fransisco and Moscow, Aviv and Schneer probe what makes Jews feel "at home."

Some of the ways Jews "place" themselves within the world are more metaphoric than spatial: a chapter called "Queer Jews at Home" explores a kind of dislocation that challenges any preconceived notions of finding oneself within Judaism. And although at times the authors seem oddly confused about why Israel has played such a central role, imagined or real, in forming a "Jewish geography," they do explore the ways Zionism—versus an imagined global Jewish ethos—might affect the Jewish people in the future.

In their treatment of the places and faces of modern Jewish life, both these books presuppose that Jewish identity is changing and evolving, becoming ever more difficult to navigate. We should be grateful, then, to have these helpful roadmaps.

– MELANIE WEISS

**When nobody was willing to rent to the notorious Emma Goldman, she found shelter in a brothel.**

## French Kisses

*In Paris, Jews had better play by the rules.*

*French Seduction: An American's Encounter with France, Her Father, and the Holocaust* (Carroll & Graf, $23.95) is feminist art historian **Eunice Lipton's** passionate attempt to reconcile opposing characteristics in French culture and society. An amalgam of history and personal narrative (as was the author's wonderful study of Manet's model in *Alias Olympia*), *French Seduction* scrutinizes both what is so enticing and so repellent about France. Lipton, whose father romanticized Paris for her and who today lives there half the year, has sustained a rocky love affair with this most sensuous of European cities.

Lipton is nothing if not attuned to her senses, and Paris satisfies them on a grand scale. "What is one to make of the 350 cheeses fabricated all over France?" she asks, giving us proof—as she often does in this book—that the French are eager to serve their appetites and are endlessly resourceful in doing so. Yet Lipton's love of France plays on her conscience and, it seems, drove her to write this book.

The author tries to broker a peace between both her own conflicts and those of her beloved France. She skillfully draws from examples in history, literature, and art to establish the great duality of France's nature: on the one hand idealistic, generous, refined, enlightened, and chic; on the other racist, anti-Semitic, and xenophobic—a former leader in the arts quickly sinking into complacency. While she is drawn to paintings of the leisure class engaged in sybaritic pleasures, she is tugged back to her working-class roots and to her indignation over social injustices. But where Lipton can—and does—acknowledge her contradictions, she makes it clear the French are not so willing to concede theirs.

Behaviors that challenge the ideals of the French Republic are in constant evidence. The Republic stands for collective rights and is famous for taking care of its citizens; its social system provides a modicum of security from cradle to grave. But to enjoy what France has to offer, Lipton points out, you have to observe its rules. If you are a French citizen of Algerian descent, you are obliged to speak French and play down your Muslim identity.

Better yet, you'd *best* remain unemployed in your high-rise ghetto in the suburbs while the *French* French revel in their state jobs that are guaranteed for life.

That anti-Semitism has had an insidious influence on French history and has survived into the present is not news, but Lipton puts it in the context of France's long legacy of disdaining and fearing the Other. The warm reception of African-American soldiers and expatriates, for instance, was perhaps more a matter of the French impressing themselves with their adventurous spirit than it was the result of true open-mindedness.

Lipton's tough political-mindedness is what makes this memoir expansive. Her discursive style is for the most part redeemed by her scholarship, although she is less successful at integrating reflections about her father into her thesis. Still, he was a difficult man who treated her with a baffling inconsistency, and her relationship with France does have echoes of this earlier, primal relationship—which is why we believe her when she says, "seduction and betrayal, I'm afraid, is a trajectory I call home."

—PATRICIA GROSSMAN

## Emma Goldman Comix

*The bold life of everyone's favorite Jewish anarchist.*

Pioneer underground cartoonist **Sharon Rudahl** left comics early, putting her work on the back burner while raising and home-schooling a family. But her simmering pot has cooked to perfection and chef Rudahl has produced a *chef d'oeuvre* with her first graphic novel about Emma Goldman, everyone's favorite Jewish anarchist. Meticulously researched and lovingly drawn, *Dangerous Woman* (New Press, $17.95) details Goldman's life from her birth in Czarist Russia to her 1940 death in exile, in Canada. Like blunt-speaking Goldman herself, Rudahl's Socialist-realist art style pulls no punches. She draws every lump and makes no attempt to beautify anyone, including homely Emma. A feminist and practitioner of what was then called "free love," Goldman's plain looks did not keep the boys away, and she had numerous lovers, the last when she was sixty-four years old and he was thirty-six. This led to no end of adventures: she once horsewhipped a comrade who accused one of her lovers of being in league with the bosses. On another occasion, she and a comrade dug a tunnel to break a lover out of prison, but they miscalculated and the tunnel came out in the wrong place. All this, and more, Rudahl manages to tell us about in her comic.

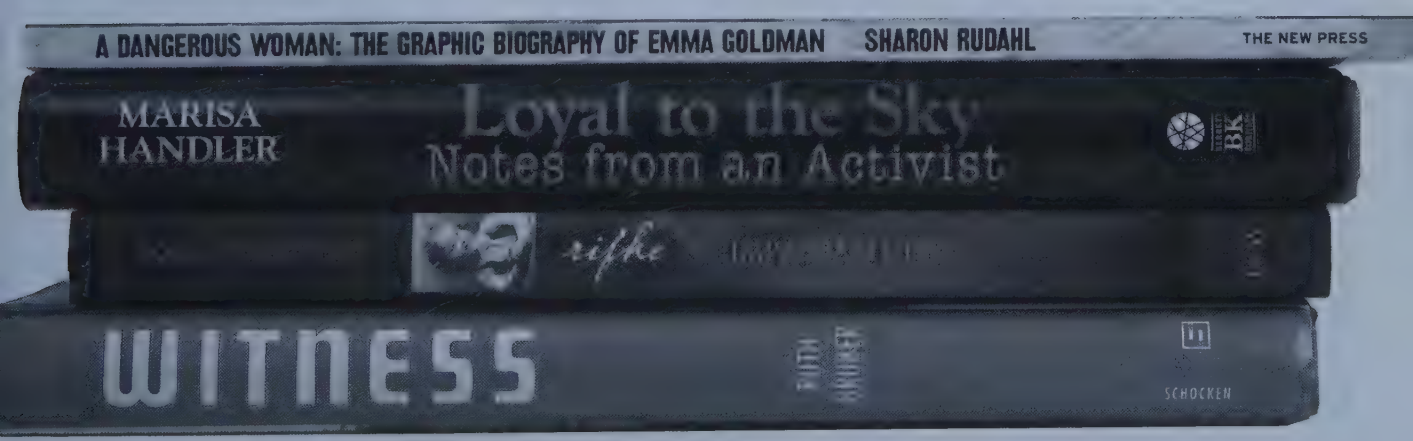
Goldman was fiery and outrageous, and sometimes pretty wacky. At one point in her life, she even took to the streets as a prostitute to earn the money for bomb materials. According to Rudahl, she was a dismal failure as a hooker. When nobody was willing to rent to the notorious Goldman, she found shelter in a brothel, where she sewed dresses for the working girls.

Another time, Goldman dropped everything to rescue a stranded Russian avant-garde theater group, starring future silent-film star Alla Nazimova. Grateful manager Pavel Orlenoff put on a benefit performance to finance Emma's literary magazine, *Mother Earth*, but his many creditors had him arrested after the first performance.

Rudahl tells Goldman's story with passion and humor. In one panel, she draws Groucho, Harpo and Chico explaining Marxism. She writes that Voltairine de Cleyre and Goldman, both anarchists, were never friends. They appear side-by-side at a rally, Voltairine thinking, "Loud! Flamboyant and self-indulgent! Sloppy and dumpy!" while Emma thinks, "Prim and charmless!! Cold and stiff as a board!"

Deported from the United States to Russia in 1919, the uncompromising "Red Emma" soon soured on Communism. In return, Bolshevik Russia soured on Emma. Shadowed by both U.S. and Soviet agents, she left, using a fake passport. She spent the next twenty-odd years living in Sweden, Germany, England, and Spain, a woman without a country. After her death in Canada, the U.S. admitted her one last time. She is buried in Chicago's Waldheim cemetery, near Voltairine de Cleyre, who had so annoyed her, and near the martyrs of the Haymarket riot.

The world of comics that Rudahl left behind in the 1970s was almost completely male-dominated. Today graphic novelists like Marjane Satrapi (*Persepolis*) and Alison Bechdel (*Fun Home*) are proving that woman are a force to be reckoned with in the field of comics. With her graphic biography of Emma Goldman,



Rudahl has joined the ranks of women cartoonists who are reclaiming the field, all of them dangerous women.

– TRINA ROBBINS

## At the Four Seasons

*From shtetl families in North Toronto to the Sultan of Brunei's birthday party.*

*Rifke: An Improbable Life* by **Rosalie Wise Sharp** (ECW Press, $19.95) may belong to the rags-to-riches genre, but this engaging memoir would be more accurately described as shtetl-to-Four Seasons.

The 70-year old Toronto author begins her account with an anecdote about an actual journey, in 1998,—an "around the world trip in eight days" with a stop in Brunei for the Sultan's birthday party, on a private jet newly acquired by her husband Isidore Sharp, founder and CEO of the Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts. Sharp confesses that as the plane takes off, "we can't stop grinning... two schleppers like us... raised in households where one bathroom sometimes served 12, and our parents came from a Polish shtetl with no indoor plumbing."

But the narrative is not about how far Rifke and Issy have gone. It's about where they came from. "Rifke" is a vivid insider's view of a shtetl upbringing in the WASP bastion of North Toronto where, she writes, "We were occasionally called dirty Jews." As a child living in the shadow of the Holocaust, she experienced the "unreality" of going to school with kids "whose grandmothers were not gassed but took them to see the Nutcracker ballet at Christmas." Which was the real world? young Rifke wondered. As an adult, she travelled to Ozarow in Poland. She tells us: "In my line of Jews, I am the last link to the vanished world of the Eastern European shtetl... it seems important to record the somewhat weird ways of my growing-up years, because there is not a single Jew left in Ozarow and I'm the last generation of the shtetl breed."

Using Yiddish chapter titles and expressions, this book draws us through the decades and the fortunes of the author's birth family and the family she forms with her adored Issy. She takes the reader into her confidence to such a degree that she reveals, publicly for the first time, that at 17, the shtetl girl became pregnant with Issy's child. "I had no choice," she writes. "I was smitten." She tell us, too, of the passions instilled in her after reading Betty Friedan—Sharp went back to school and got a degree in art, designed hotel rooms and became a renowned collector, curator and scholar of ceramics, which she describes as "my cheerful madness."

In later chapters she offers us glimpses of the jet-set life, of "consorting with kings and princes." With the self-awareness that contributes to the bond that forms between reader and author, Sharp explains, "It doesn't come naturally to me but I make a good show of it. Issy and I enjoy the company of the Saudi Prince Alwaleed, a major investor in Four Seasons....We are often guests in his palace and his retreat outside Riyadh."

She loves attending new hotel openings in foreign places, not because of the glamour, but "because I don't know anyone there and I can move around unobserved. Mainly, she acknowledges, "On these trips, I derive much naches from watching my husband in action...." The joy we derive from this book, though, is undoubtedly the joy of seeing Rifke herself in action.

– JUDY GERSTEL

## OUR REVIEWERS:

**ELEANOR J. BADER** is a teacher and writer whose work appears in The Brooklyn Rail, Library Journal, The NY Law Journal, The Indypendent, The Public Eye, and womensenews.

**SUSAN BAROCAS** is a filmmaker, writer and teacher living in Washington, DC. She is currently working on a film about white South Africans who opposed apartheid.

**JUDY GERSTEL**, a writer in the Living section of the Toronto Star, grew up in what she describes as the shtetl of North Winnipeg in the 1950s and now enjoys the occasional luxury of staying at a Four Seasons hotel.

**PATRICIA GROSSMAN** is the author of five novels. *Brian in Three Seasons* won a Ferro-Grumly Award for best LGBT fiction for 2006.

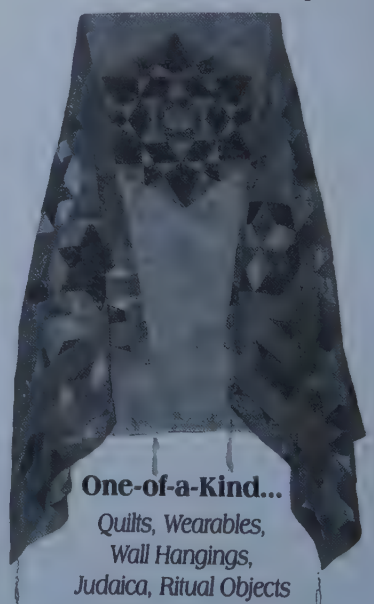
**LEAH KOENIG** is a writer, blogger and editor living in Brooklyn, NY. She is the Editor-in-Chief of the award-winning blog *The Jew and the Carrot* (www.jcarrot.org), and a regular contributor to Lilith's blog (www.lilith.org/blog). You can read more of her work at www.leahkoenig.com.

**HANNAH S. PRESSMAN** is a doctoral candidate in modern Hebrew literature at New York University. She is serving as the 2007–2008 Hazel D. Cole Fellow in Jewish Studies at the University of Washington.

**TRINA ROBBINS**, a herstorian, author, and lecturer, has been writing graphic novels, comics and books for over thirty years. She lives in San Francisco, in a moldering 102-year-old house with her cats and books.

**ILANA STANGER-ROSS** is a student-midwife in Victoria, BC. Her first novel, *Sima's Undergarments for Women*, is forthcoming from Overlook Press.

From Louise Silk, author of *The Quilting Path*



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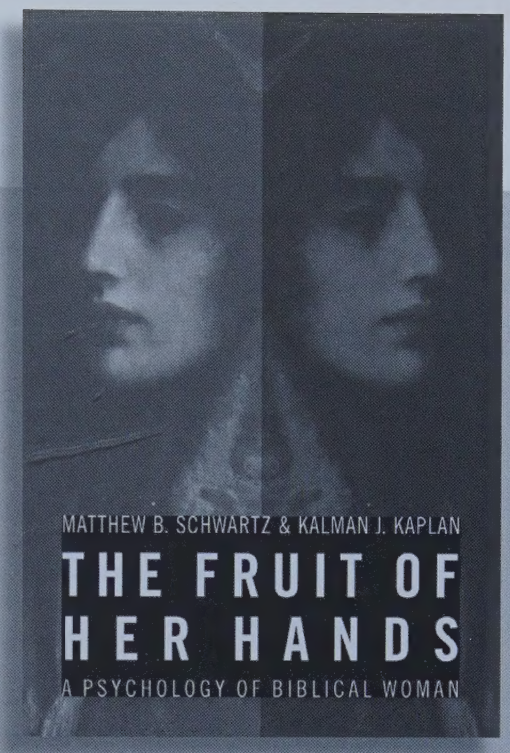
# THE FRUIT OF HER HANDS

## A PSYCHOLOGY OF BIBLICAL WOMAN

"With commendable courage, Matthew Schwartz and Kalman Kaplan defy convention to proclaim the timeless truth of God's plan for men and women."
— RABBI DANIEL LAPIN
founder and president of Toward Tradition

"This informative, provocative, insightful, and eminently readable book both depicts and celebrates the women of Hebrew Scripture. Their independence, interdependence, courage, integrity, wisdom, and commitment are presented as an expression of covenantal biblical values. . . . As this fine work demonstrates, the wisdom of the Bible continues to address the challenges of yesterday and today with moral relevance, powerful poignancy, and remarkable psychological insight."
— RABBI BYRON L. SHERWIN
Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies

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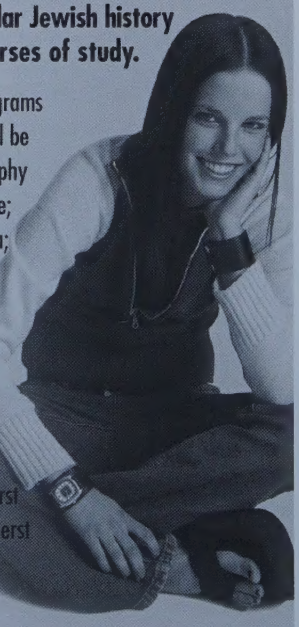
# Request for Grant Proposals

for courses in the Study of Secular Jewish History and Cultures

## $50,000 Awards annually for up to three years

**The Center for Cultural Judaism invites applications for Posen Project grants for the study of secular Jewish history and cultures. Recipients will receive $50,000 per year, for up to three years, towards new courses of study.**

These grants are intended to encourage the study of secular Jewish history within already well-established university programs and departments of Jewish Studies, Philosophy, Literature, Sociology, Anthropology or other related disciplines. Grants will be awarded to support the teaching of two to four new courses per year, including a core course in the history, texts, philosophy and literature of secular Jewish history and cultures. Selections will be made on the basis of a strong proposed core course; an understanding of what it means to teach courses in Jewish secularism or secular Jewish culture; scholarship in this area; and the ability to integrate these courses over time and make them permanent.



Grants of up to $50,000 each per year will be awarded for the 2007-2008 academic year. Upon review, these grants
are renewable for up to two years.

Deadline: November 30, 2007

Background, Guidelines, Application, and Sample Syllabi are available at www.culturaljudaism.org
or by contacting Myrna Baron, Executive Director
The Center for Cultural Judaism
212-564-6711 x301 or myrna@culturaljudaism.org

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THE CENTER FOR CULTURAL JUDAISM

**Guidelines and information are available at 212-564-6711 or www.culturaljudaism.org**

## MAKING TROUBLE,

a documentary film about Jewish women comedians, showcases Sophie Tucker, Molly Picon, Fanny Brice, Joan Rivers, Gilda Radner, and Wendy Wasserstein,

all of whom defied cultural expectations, changed the rules, and made us laugh. Look for contemporary Jewish women in comedy Judy Gold, Cory Kahaney, Jackie Hoffman and Jessica Kirson gabbing, over pickles and corned beef in a scene shot in Katz's Deli in New York, about their work, their lives, and the trailblazers who came before them. *makingtrouble.com*

## HIS WIFE'S LOVER (ZAYN VAYBS LUBOVNIK)

is billed as the "first Jewish musical comedy talking picture." In this 1931 Yiddish-language feature, script writer Sheyne Rokhl Simkoff revels in role reversals and love triangles while exploring the gender issues of her day. In the end, the lovers—a poor shop-girl and a handsome actor—triumph over deceptions and mistaken identities. The newly restored film is available from The National Center for Jewish Film, the Waltham, MA nonprofit motion picture archive that houses the largest collection of Jewish-theme films outside Israel. (USA, 80 minutes) *jewishfilm.org*

## DID YOUR HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR PARENTS TELL YOU ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES?

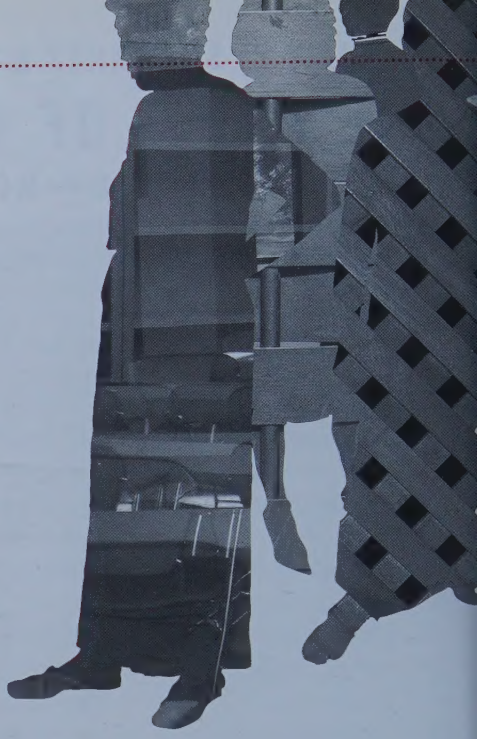
A feature-length documentary film about children and grandchildren of survivors will contrast growing up with parents who are/were active storytellers and with those who did not tell their children much about what happened to them during the war. The film will also explore how children are taking care of their aging survivor parents and grandparents. This independently-funded film is intended for use as a teaching tool in schools, community groups, and museums. To participate or learn more, contact filmmaker Michelle Kaffko, brownfinchfilms@gmail.com, cell 312-952-5911.

## GIRLS ARE LABELED BITCHES IF THEY HAVE ANY KIND OF FIGHTING SPIRIT,

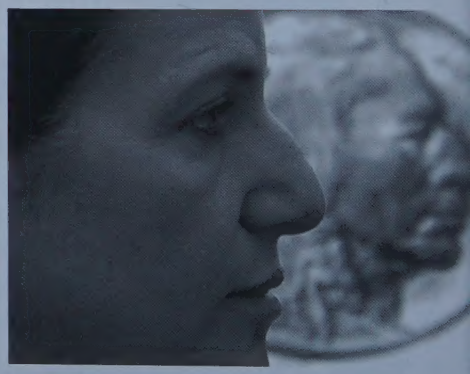
says Shirley Manson, of the rock group Garbage. She reveals her own story in the film "Cut: Teens and Self-Injury." Created by Wendy Schneider, this film provides an intimate look at a largely unacknowledged problem that afflicts thousands of young people. Using the words, music and artwork of the teens themselves along with commentary from parents and mental health professionals, Schneider exposes the sensationalism and secrecy surrounding the cycle of self-injury. *cutthemovie.com*

## THE NAMES RECOVERY PROJECT

aims to memorialize each individual Jew who perished in the Holocaust by recording their names, biographical details and photographs on Pages of



Testimony at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. You can search the online central database at yadvashem.org for victims whose names you know; if the victim is not found fill out a Page of Testimony. You can also find out about and join a group organizing this recovery effort in your area at *yadvashem.org/names/Partners.htm*.



## MY NOSE: AN INTIMATE LOOK AT A MOTHER-DAUGHTER RHINOPLASTY CONFLICT.

What do you do when you think you look good, and your mother is convinced that what you really need is a nose job? In this humorous/serious 13-minute autobiographical documentary, filmmaker Gayle Kirschenbaum explores the complex relationship of a meddling mother and her unmarried

daughter who is determined to live happily ever after—even in a beauty-obsessed world—with her original, imperfect nose. *kirschenbaumproducitons.com/mynose*

## THE WOMENS PRAYER SECTION.

Ezrat Nashim, an installation by Miriam Stern, addresses themes of separateness, prayer and feminism symbolized by the partition or *mehitza* that sets women apart from men in Orthodox synagogues. Flat sculptures of larger than life-size female figures include on one side a self portrait of the artist and images of nine of her friends; on the other side their silhouettes are overlaid with photos of lace, wire, and other materials typically used to create these partitions. A sound component features a group of women quietly singing the Hallel service, recited on the new month and other holidays. Through January 13, 2008 at Yeshiva University Museum in New York City. *yumuseum.org*

## THE BEDTIME SH'MA: A GOOD NIGHT CD

is an audio companion to the eponymous book written by Sarah Gershman and illustrated by Kristian Swarner. The picture book and CD focus on themes of protection and preparing for sleep and help make bedtime for children under six a Jewish experience. The full original Hebrew bedtime liturgy appears in the back of the book with a slightly abbreviated and gender-neutral English translation. The soothing and hypnotic lullaby/prayers, all sung in Hebrew to melodies from various Jewish musical traditions, are arranged by vocalist Rabbi Julia Andelman and guitarist Benjamin Dreyfus with additional vocals by 10-year-old Ronit Morris. *ekspublishing.com* (510-251-9100)

## RESOURCES FOR ASHKENAZI WOMEN AT RISK FOR HEREDITARY OVARIAN CANCER.

**People of Ashkenazi (Eastern European) Jewish descent are more likely than others to carry a genetic mutation that increases the risk of developing ovarian and breast cancer. Approximately one out of 40 people of Ashkenazi Jewish descent will carry a cancer-causing mutation, which can be inherited from either the mother or the father.**

- **More information at ovariancancer.org.**
- **Facing Our Risk of Cancer Empowered (FORCE), a partner member of the Ovarian Cancer National Alliance, serves women with increased risk of cancer. Visit *facingourrisk.org*.**
- **The National Cancer Institute (NCI) has useful resources including Genetic Testing for Breast and Ovarian Cancer Risk: It's Your Choice, at *cancer.gov/cancertopics/Genetic-Testing-for-Breast-and-Ovarian-Cancer-Risk*.**

## YOUR COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR FATHER...

Perhaps you have something to contribute to "Jewish Feminists and Our Fathers: Reflections Across Gender and Generations," the special Spring 2009 issue of Bridges: A Jewish Feminist Journal (bridgesjournal.org). Poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction, essays, reviews and websites or black and white art need to be received by July 15, 2008. Query first to guest editors Rebecca Alpert (ralpert@temple.edu) and Laura Levitt (llevitt@temple.edu).

## JEWISH WOMEN IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION.

For over 30 years, photographer Joan Roth has been documenting the lives of women who, through the efforts of Project Kesher (projectkesher.org), have taken on activism and human rights advocacy on breast cancer, family violence awareness, and more, while also engaging—most for the first time—in Jewish learning. This photo essay/exhibit illustrates a slice of rich Jewish feminist history and the strength, voice and pride of communities almost silenced by 70 years of systematic religious oppression and anti-Semitism. Through January 25. At HUC-JIR Museum, 1 West 4th Street. *huc.jir.edu*

To find out about events and projects going on in between issues if Lilith, to listen to podcasts and respond to blog posts, check out WHAT'S NEW on the Lilith homepage: *www.Lilith.org. To send suggestions for this section: info@Lilith.org*

*compiled by Naomi Danis, naomi@lilith.org*

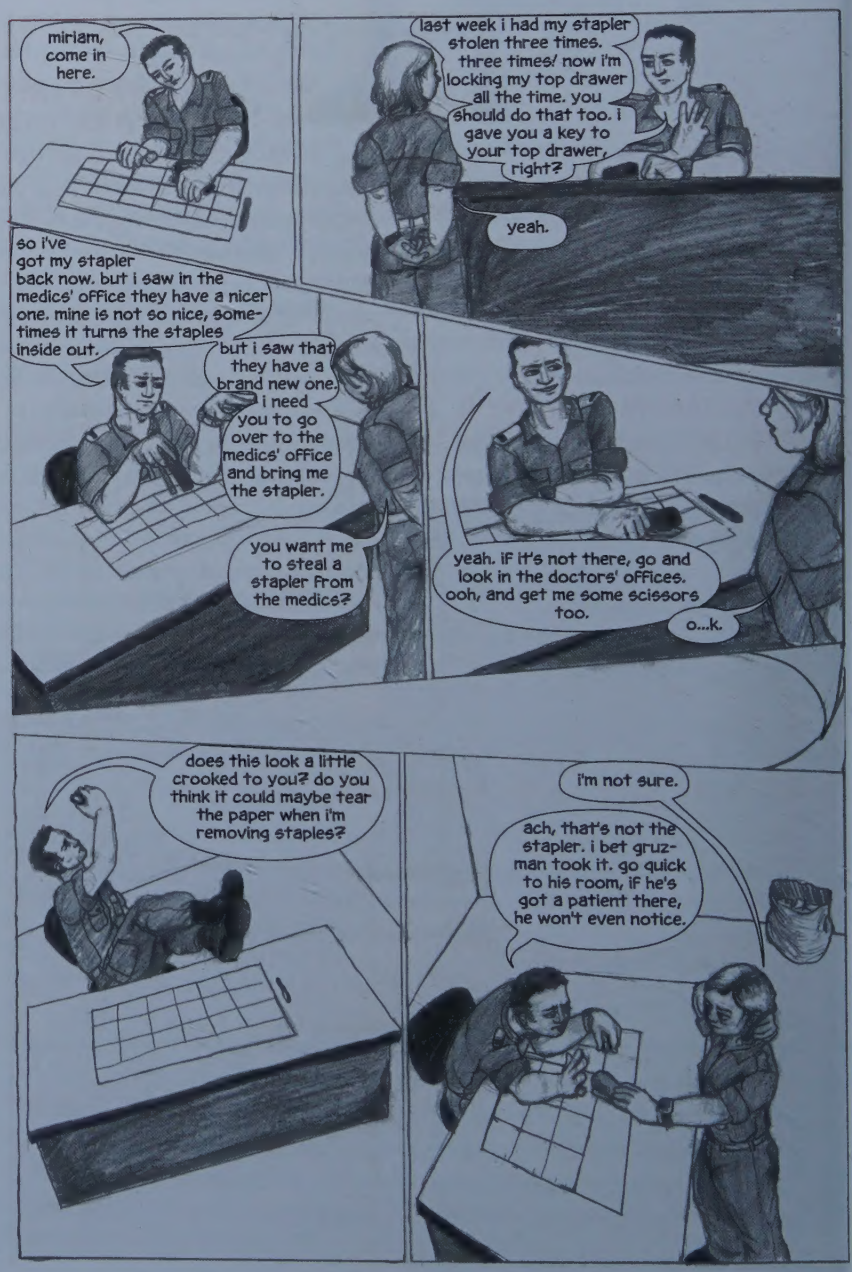
# JOBNIK! by Miriam Libicki

In the Summer of 2000, Miriam, a young American-Jewish girl from a religious home, enlisted in the Israeli Defense Force (IDF). Classified as introverted and excessively emotional, as well as possessing poor Hebrew skills, she has been stationed at an Armored Corps training base in Southern Israel, where she works in the infirmary as a rather superfluous secretary and file clerk. Now, it's four months, two disastrous romantic entanglements, and one collapsed Israeli/Palestinian peace process later.

Following in the path of her older siblings, Miriam Libicki spent her senior year of high school in Israel. Unlike them, though, she enrolled in a program intended for Israelis who have finished high school and deferred their mandatory army service for a year. The aim was to create a dialogue between the secular and religious youth of Israel, who took classes together, and staffed mentoring and learning centers in the poor Jerusalem neighborhood where they lived for that year.

Miriam was the first non-Israeli to enter the program. Barely speaking Hebrew, she filled sketchbooks with portraits in an attempt to communicate with (and impress) her peers. Although she had never originally considered making aliyah, she was inspired to stay and apply for citizenship after a Mechina memorial service for Yitzhak Rabin. Not to do things halfway, she also became determined to serve in the Israeli army. In 2000, at age 19, Miriam was drafted.

She now lives in Vancouver with her husband and eight parrots. This scene is an excerpt from her graphic-novel-in-progress.


miriam, come in here.
last week i had my stapler stolen three times. three times! now i'm locking my top drawer all the time. you should do that too. i gave you a key to your top drawer, right?
yeah.
so i've got my stapler back now. but i saw in the medics' office they have a nicer one. mine is not so nice, sometimes it turns the staples inside out.
but i saw that they have a brand new one. i need you to go over to the medics' office and bring me the stapler.
you want me to steal a stapler from the medics?
yeah. if it's not there, go and look in the doctors' offices. ooh, and get me some scissors too.
o...k.
does this look a little crooked to you? do you think it could maybe tear the paper when i'm removing staples?
i'm not sure.
ach, that's not the stapler. i bet gruzman took it. go quick to his room, if he's got a patient there, he won't even notice.